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LONDON LYRICS



LONDON LYRICS

By FREDERICK LOCKER



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DEDICATION.

I PAUSE upon the threshold, O most dear,

To write thy name ; so may my book acquire
One golden leaf. For Some yet sojourn here

Who come and go in homeliest attire,
Unknown, or only by the few who see

The cross they bear, the good that they have wrought :
Of such art thou, and I have found in thee

Truth and the love that HE, the MASTER, taught ;
Thou likest thy humble poet : canst thou say
With truth, my dearest, " And I like his lay ? "

ROME, *May*, 1862.

207553

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PUBLISHED IN 1857

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR.

YOU shake your saucy curls, and vow
I build no airy castles now ;
You smile, and you are thinking too,
He's nothing else on earth to do.

It needs Romance, my Lady Fair,
To build a Castle in the Air :
Ethereal brick, and rainbow beam,
The gossamer of Fancy's dream ;
And much the architect may lack
Who labours in the Zodiac
To rear what I, from chime to chime,
Attempted once upon a time.

My Castle was a gay retreat
In Air, that somewhat gusty shire,
A cherub's model country seat,—
Could model cherub such require.
Nor twinge nor tax existence tortured,
Even the cherubs spared my orchard !

No worm destroy'd the gourd I planted,
And showers came when rain was wanted.
I own'd a tract of purple mountain,
A sweet mysterious haunted fountain,
A terraced lawn, a summer lake,
By sun- or moon-beam always burnish'd ;
And then my cot, by some mistake,
Unlike most cots, was neatly furnish'd—
A trellis'd porch, a pictured hall,
A Hebe laughing from the wall ;
Frail vases, Attic and Cathay ;
While under arms and armour wreath'd
In trophied guise, the marble breathed,
A peering faun—a startled fay.
And flowers that Love's own language spoke,
Than these less eloquent of smoke,
And not so dear. The price in town
Is half a rose-bud—half-a-crown !

And cabinets and chandeliers,
The legacy of courtly years ;
Stain'd windows dark, and pillow'd light,
Soft sofas, where the Sybarite,
In bliss reclining, might devour
The best last novel of the hour.
On silken cushion, laced and pearl'd,
A shaggy pet from Skye was curl'd ;
While drowsy-eyed, would dozing swing
A parrot in his golden ring.

All these I saw one happy day,
And more than now I care to name ;
Here, lately shut, that work-box lay,
There stood your own embroidery frame.
And over this piano bent
A Form from some pure region lent.
Her auburn tresses darkly shone
In lovely clusters, like your own ;
And as her fingers touch'd the keys,
How strangely they resembled these !

Yes, you, you only, Lady Fair,
Adorn'd my Castle in the Air,
And life, without the least foundation,
Became a charming occupation.
We heard, with much sublime disdain,
The far-off thunder of Cockaigne ;
And saw, through rifts of silver cloud,
The rolling smoke that hid the crowd.
With souls released from earthly tether,
We gazed upon the moon together.
Our sympathy from night to noon
Rose crescent with that crescent moon ;
The night was briefer than the song,
And happy as the day was long.
We lived and loved in cloudless climes,
And even died (in verse) sometimes.

Yes, you, you only, Lady Fair,
Adorn'd my Castle in the Air.

Now, tell me, could you dwell content
In such a baseless tenement?
Or could so delicate a flower
Exist in such a breezy bower?
Because, if you would settle in it,
'Twere built for love in half a minute.

What's love? Why love (for two), at best,
Is only a delightful jest;
As sad for one as bad for three,—
I wish you'd come and jest with me.

You shake your head and wonder why

The cynosure of dear Mayfair
Should lend me even half a sigh

Towards building Castles in the Air.

"I've music, books, and all you say,
To make the gravest lady gay.

I'm told my essays show research,

My sketches have endow'd a church;

I've partners who have brilliant parts—

I've lovers who have broken hearts.

Poor Polly would not care to fly,

And Mop, you know, was born in Skye.

To realise your *tête-à-tête*

Might jeopardise a giddy pate;

Indeed, my much-devoted vassal,

I'm sorry that you've built your Castle!"

And is this all we gain by fancies

For noonday dreams and waking trances;

The dreams that brought poor souls mishap
When Baby Time was fond of pap ;
And still will cheat with feigning joys,
While beauty smiles, and men are boys ?
The blooming rose conceals an asp,
And bliss, coquetting, flies the grasp.
How vain the toy that pleased at first !
But myrtles fade, and bubbles burst.
The cord has snapt that held my kite ;—
My friends won't read the books I write,
 And wonder bards can be so spleeny !
I dance, but dancing's not the thing ;
They will not listen, though I sing,
 “ Fra poco ” almost like Rubini !
The poet's harp beyond my reach is,
The senate will not stand my speeches ;
I risk a jest,—its point of course
Is marr'd by some disturbing force ;
I doubt the friends that Fortune gave me ;
But have I friends from whom to save me ?

Farewell ! can aught for her be will'd
Whose every wish is all fulfill'd ?
Farewell ! could wishing weave a spell,
There's promise in those words, *fare well*.

The lady's smile show'd no remorse,—
 “ My worthless toy has lost its gilding,”
I murmur'd with pathetic force,
 “ And here's an end of castle-building ;”

Then strode away in mood morose,
To blame the Sage of Careless Close ;
He trifled with my tale of sorrow,—
“What’s marr’d to-day is made to-morrow ;
Romance can roam not far from home,
 Knock gently, she must answer soon ;
I’m sixty-five, and yet I strive
 To hang my garland on the moon.”

1848.

THE OLD CRADLE.

AND this was your Cradle? Why surely, my Jenny,
Such slender dimensions go clearly to show
You were an exceedingly small picaninny
Some nineteen or twenty short summers ago.

Your baby-days flow'd in a much-troubled channel ;
I see you as then in your impotent strife,
A tight little bundle of wailing and flannel,
Perplex'd with that newly-found fardel call'd Life.

To hint at an infantine frailty's a scandal ;
Let by-gones be by-gones, and somebody knows
It was bliss such a Baby to dance and to dandle,
Your cheeks were so velvet, so rosy your toes.

Ay, here is your Cradle ; and Hope, at times lonely,
With Love now is watching beside it, I know.
They guard the small nest you inherited only
Some nineteen or twenty short summers ago.

It is Hope gilds the future, Love welcomes it smiling ;
Thus wags the old world, therefore stay not to ask,
“ My future bids fair, is my future beguiling ? ”
If mask'd, still it pleases—then raise not the mask.

Is Life a poor coil some would gladly be doffing?
He is riding post-haste who their wrongs will adjust ;
For at most 'tis a footstep from cradle to coffin—
From a spoonful of pap to a mouthful of dust.

Then smile as your future is smiling, my Jenny !
I see you, except for those infantine woes,
Little changed since you were but a small picaninny
—Your cheeks were so velvet, so rosy your toes !

Ay, here is your Cradle ! much, much to my liking,
Though nineteen or twenty long winters have sped ;
But hark ! as I'm talking there's six o'clock striking,—
It is time JENNY'S BABY should be in its bed.

O TEMPORA MUTANTUR !

YES, here, once more a traveller,
I find the Angel Inn,
Where landlord, maids, and serving-men
Receive me with a grin :
They surely can't remember *me*,
My hair is grey and scanter ;
I'm changed, so changed since I was here—
“ O tempora mutantur ! ”

The Angel is not alter'd since
The sunny month of June,
That brought me here with Pamela
To spend our honeymoon.
I recollect it down to e'en
The shape of this decanter,—
We've since been both much put about—
“ O tempora mutantur ! ”

Ay, there's the clock, and looking-glass
Reflecting me again ;
She vow'd her love was very fair,
I see I'm very plain.

And there's that daub of Prince Leeboo :
'Twas Pamela's fond banter
To fancy it resembled me—
“ O tempora mutantur ! ”

The curtains have been dyed ; but there,
Unbroken, is the same,
The very same crack'd pane of glass
On which I scratch'd her name.
Yes, there's her tiny flourish still,
It once could so enchant her
To link two happy names in one—
“ O tempora mutantur ! ”

* * * * *

The Pilgrim sees an empty chair
Where Pamela once sat ;
It may be she is past all care,
It might be worse than that !
Some die, and then some best of men
Have met with a supplanter ;—
I wish that I could change this cry,
“ O tempora mutantur ! ”

PICCADILLY.

PICCADILLY! Shops, palaces, bustle, and
breeze;

The whirring of wheels, and the murmur of trees;
By night or by day, whether noisy or stilly,
Whatever my mood is—I love Piccadilly.

Wet nights, when the gas on the pavement is
streaming,
And young Love is watching, and old Love is
dreaming,
And Beauty is whirling to conquest, where shrilly
Cremona makes nimble thy toes, Piccadilly!

Bright days, when a stroll is my afternoon wont,
And I meet all the people I do know or don't:
Here is jolly old Brown, and his fair daughter
Lillie;—

No wonder some pilgrims affect Piccadilly!

See yonder pair riding, how fondly they saunter!
She smiles on her poet, whose heart's in a canter:
Some envy her spouse, and some covet her filly,
He envies them both,—he's an ass, Piccadilly!

Were I that gay bride, with a slave at my feet,
I would choose me a house in my favourite street ;
Yes or no—I would carry my point, willy-nilly :
If “no,”—pick a quarrel ; if “yes,”—Piccadilly !

From Primrose balcony, long ages ago,
“Old Q.” sat at gaze,—who now passes below ?
A frolicsome statesman, the Man of the Day ;
A laughing philosopher, gallant and gay ;
No darling of fortune more manfully trod,
Full of years, full of fame, and the world at his nod :
Can the thought reach his heart, and then leave it
more chilly—
“Old P. or Old Q.,—I must quit Piccadilly ?”

Life is chequer’d ; a patchwork of smiles and of frowns ;
We value its ups, let us muse on its downs ;
There’s a side that is bright, it will then turn us
t’other,
One turn, if a good one, deserves yet another.
These downs are delightful, *these* ups are not hilly,—
Let us turn one more turn ere we quit Piccadilly.

THE OLD GOVERNMENT CLERK.

WE knew an old scribe, it was "once on a time,"
An era to set sober datists despairing ;
Then let them despair ! Darby sat in a chair
Near the Cross that gave name to the village of
Charing.

Though silent and lean, Darby was not malign,
What hair he had left was more silver than sable ;
He had also contracted a curve in his spine,
From bending too constantly over a table.

His pay and expenditure, quite in accord,
Were both on the strictest economy founded ;
His masters were known as the Sealing-wax Board,
And they ruled where red tape and snug places
abounded.

In his heart he look'd down on this dignified knot ;
For why ? The forefather of one of these senators,—
A rascal concern'd in the Gunpowder Plot,—
Had been barber-surgeon to Darby's progenitors.

Poor fool, what is life? A vagary of luck!

Still, for thirty long years—of genteel destitution—
He'd been writing State Papers, which means he had
stuck

A few heads and some tails to much circumlocution

This sounds rather weary and dreary; but, no!

Though strictly inglorious, his days were quiescent.
His red-tape was tied in a true-lover's bow

Every night when returning to Rosemary Crescent.

There Joan meets him smiling, the young ones are
there;

His coming is bliss to the half-dozen wee things;
The dog and the cat have a greeting to spare,
And Phyllis, neat-handed, is laying the tea-things.

East wind, sob eerily! Sing, kettle, cheerily!

Baby's abed, but its father will rock it;
His little ones boast their permission to toast
The nice cake that good fellow brings home in his
pocket.

This greeting the silent old Clerk understands,

Now his friends he can love, had he foes he could
mock them;

So met, so surrounded, his bosom expands,—

Some tongues have more need of such scenes to
unlock them.

And Darby, at least, is resign'd to his lot ;
And Joan, rather proud of the sphere he's adorning,
Has nigh forgotten that Gunpowder Plot,—
And *he* won't recall it till ten the next morning.

A kindly good man, quite a stranger to fame,
His heart still is green, though his head shows a
hoar lock ;
Perhaps his particular star is to blame,—
It may be, he never took Time by the forelock.

A day must arrive when, in pitiful case,
He will drop from his Branch, like a fruit more than
mellow ;
Is he yet to be found in his usual place ?
Or is he already forgotten, poor fellow ?

If still at his duty he soon will arrive ;
He passes this turning because it is shorter ;
If not within sight as the clock's going five,
We shall see him before it is chiming the quarter.

ARCADIA.

THE healthy-wealthy-wise affirm
That early birds obtain the worm,—
The worm rose early too !
Who scorns his couch should glean by rights
A world of pleasant sounds and sights
That vanish with the dew :

Bright Phosphor from his watch released
Now fading from the purple east,
As morning gets the stronger ;
The comely cock that vainly strives
To crow from sleep his drowsy wives,
Who would be roosting longer.

Uxorious Chanticleer !—And hark !
Upraise thine eyes, and find the lark,
The matutine musician
Who heavenward soars on rapture's wings,
Though sought, unseen,—who mounts and sings
In musical derision.

From sea-girt pile, where nobles dwell,
A daughter waves her sire *farewell*
 Across the sunlit water :
All these were heard or seen by one
Who stole a march upon that sun,
 And then—upon that daughter !

This dainty maid, the county's pride,
A white lamb trotting at her side,
 Had tript it through the park ;
A fond and gentle foster-dam,
Maybe she slumber'd with her lamb,
 Thus rising with the lark !

The lambkin frisk'd, the lady fain
Would coax him back, she call'd in vain,
 The rebel proved unruly ;
The sun came streaming o'er the lake ;
One follow'd for the maiden's sake,
 A happy fellow truly !

The maid gave chase, the lambkin ran
As only woolly truant can
 Who never felt a crook ;
But stay'd at length, as if disposed
To drink, where tawny sands disclosed
 The margin of a brook.

His mistress, who had follow'd fast,
Cried, "Little rogue, you're caught at last ;
I'm cleverer than you."
She then the wanderer convey'd
Where branching shrubs, in tangled shade,
Protected her from view.

And timidly she glanced around,
All fearful lest the slightest sound
Might mortal footfall be ;
Then shrinkingly she stept aside
One moment—and her garter tied
The truant to a tree.

Perhaps the world would like to know
The hue of this enchanting bow,
And if 'twere silk or lace ;
No, not from him !—be pleased to think
It might be either—blue or pink,
'Twas tied with maiden grace.

Suffice it that the child was fair
As Una sweet, with golden hair,
And come of high degree ;
And though her feet were pure from stain,
She turn'd her to the brook again,
And laved them dreamingly.

Awhile she sat in maiden mood,
And watch'd the shadows from the wood,
 That varied on the stream ;
And as each pretty foot she dipp'd,
The little waves rose crystal-lipp'd
 In welcome, it would seem.

Yet reveries are fleeting things,
That come and go on whimsy wings ;
 As kindly Fancy taught her
The Fair her tender day-dream nurs'd ;
But when the light-blown bubble burst,
 She wearied of the water ;

Betook her to the spot where yet
Safe tether'd lay her captured pet,
 To roving tastes a martyr ;
But all at once she saw a change,
And scream'd (it seem'd so very strange !)—
 Cried Echo, "Where's my garter ?"

The blushing girl her lamb led home ;
Perhaps she thought, "No more we'll roam
 At peep of day together ;
Or if we do, why then it's plain
We will not venture forth again
 Without an extra tether !"

A pure white stone will mark this morn,
He wears a prize, one gladly worn,
 Love's gage, though not intended ;
Indeed he'll guard it near his heart,
Till sun, and moon, and stars depart,
 And chivalry has ended !

Dull World ! He now resigns to you
The tinsel star, and ribbon blue,
 That pride for folly barter :
He'll bear his cross amid your jars,
His ribbon prize, and thank his stars
 He does not crave your garters.

THE PILGRIMS OF PALL MALL.

MY little friend, so small and neat,
Whom years ago I used to meet
In Pall Mall daily,
How cheerily you tript away
To work, it might have been to play,
You tript so gaily.

And Time trips too. This moral means
You then were midway in the teens
That I was crowning ;
We never spoke, but when I smiled
At morn or eve, I know, dear Child,
You were not frowning.

Each morning when we met, I think
One sentiment us both did link,
Nor joy, nor sorrow ;
And then at eve, experience-taught,
Our hearts were lighter for the thought,—
We meet to-morrow !

And you were poor ! so poor ! and why ?
How kind to come, it was for my
 Especial grace meant !
Had you a chamber near the stars,
A bird, some treasured plants in jars,
 About your casement ?

I often wander up and down,
When morning bathes the silent town
 In golden glory :
Perhaps, unwittingly, I've heard
Your thrilling-toned canary-bird
 From that third story.

I've seen some change since last we met—
A patient little seamstress yet,
 On small means striving,
Are you (if Love such luck allows)
Some lucky fellow's little spouse ?—
 Is baby thriving ?

My heart grows chill—can soul like thine
Have tired of this dear world of mine,
 And snapt Life's fetter ?
To find a world whose promised bliss
Is better than the best of this,—
 And is it better ?

Sometimes to Pall Mall I repair,
And see the damsels passing there ;—
 But if I try to
Obtain one glance, they look discreet,
As though they'd some one else to meet ;—
 As have not *I* too?

Yet still I often think upon
Our many meetings, come and gone !
 July—December !
Now let us make a tryst, and when,
Dear little soul, we meet again,—
The mansion is preparing—then
 Thy Friend remember !

THE RUSSET PITCHER.

“The pot goeth so long to the water till at length it cometh
broken home.”,

AWAY, ye simple ones, away !
Bring no vain fancies hither ;
The brightest dreams of youth decay,
The fairest roses wither.

Ay, since this fountain first upwell'd,
And Dryad learnt to drink,
Knit hand in hand, have lovers held
Sweet parley at its brink.

From youth to age this waterfall
Most tunefully flows on,
But where, ay, tell me where are all
The constant lovers gone ?

The falcon on the turtle preys,
And beardless vows are brittle ;
The brightest dream of youth decays,—
Ah, love is good for little.

“Fair maiden, set thy pitcher down,
And heed a truth neglected :—
*The more this sorry world is known,
The less it is respected.*

“Though youth is ardent, gay, and bold,
It flatters and beguiles ;
Though Giles is young,—and I am old,
Ne’er trust thy heart to Giles.

“Thy pitcher may some luckless day
Be broken coming hither ;
Thy doting slave may prove a knave—
The fairest roses wither.”

She laugh’d outright, she scorn’d him quite,
She deftly fill’d her pitcher ;
For that dear sight an anchorite
Would deem himself thericher.

Ill-fated damsel ! go thy way,
Thy lover’s vows are lither ;
The brightest dreams of youth decay,
The fairest roses wither.

.
These days were soon the days of yore ;
Six summers pass, and then
That musing man would see once more
The fountain in the glen ;

Again would stray where once he stray'd,
Through copse and quiet dell,
Half hoping too to meet the maid
Pass tripping from the well.

No light step comes, but, evil-starr'd,
He finds a mournful token,
There lies a russet pitcher marr'd,—
The damsel's pitcher broken !

Profoundly moved, that muser cried,
“The spoiler has been hither ;
O would the maiden first had died,—
The fairest roses wither !”

He turn'd from that unholy ground,
His world-worn bosom throbbing ;
A bow-shot thence a child he found,
The little man was sobbing.

He gently stroked that curly head,—
“My child, what brings thee hither ?
Weep not, my simple child,” he said,
“Or let us weep together.

“Thy world, I ween, is gay and green,
A garden undefiled ;
Thy thought should run on mirth and fun,—
Where dwellest thou, my child ?”

'Twas then the rueful urchin spoke :

“ My daddy's Giles the ditcher,
I fetch the water,—O I've broke—
I've broke my mammy's pitcher ! ”

THE FAIRY ROSE.

“**T**HERE are plenty of roses” (the patriarch speaks)—

“Alas ! not for me—on your lips, and your cheeks ;
Sweet maiden, rose-laden—enough and to spare,—
Spare, spare me the Rose that you wear in your hair.”

“O raise not thy hand,” cries the girl, “nor suppose
That I ever can part with this beautiful Rose :
The bloom is a gift of the Fays, who declare it
Will shield me from sorrow as long as I wear it.

“‘Entwine it,’ said they, ‘with your curls in a braid,
It will blossom in winter—it never will fade ;
And, if tempted to rove, recollect, as you hie,
Where you’re dying to go—’twill be going to die.’

“And breathe not, old man, such a mournful ‘heigho,’
Dost think that I have not the will to say ‘No?’
I could turn a deaf ear to a prayer—to a vow,
Though the suitor were far more persuasive than thou!”

The damsel pass'd on with a confident smile,
The old man extended his walk for awhile ;
His musings were trite, and their burden, forsooth—
The wisdom of age, and the folly of youth.

Noon comes, and noon goes ;—all the fields are in
shade

As the patriarch strolls in the path of the maid ;
The corn's in the ear, and awaiting the sickle,
The evening is fair—if the damsel is fickle.

And Echo is mute to his leisurely tread,—
“How tranquil is nature reposing !” he said ;
He onward advances, and Fate seems to lead,—
“How lonely !” quoth he—it is lonely indeed !

He gazes around, not a creature is there ;
No sound on the ground, and no voice in the air ;
But fading there lies a poor bloom that he knows—
“Bad luck to the Fairy that gave her the Rose !”

CIRCUMSTANCE.

THE ORANGE.

IT ripen'd by the river banks,
Where, mask and moonlight aiding,
Don Juans play their pretty pranks,
Dark Donnas serenading.

By Moorish damsel it was pluck'd,
Beneath the golden day there ;—
By swain 'twas then in London suck'd,
Who flung the peel away there.

He could not know in Pimlico,
As little she in Seville,
That *I* should reel upon that peel,
And wish them at the devil !

A WISH.

TO the south of the church, and beneath yonder
yew,

I have watch'd two child-lovers, unseen ;
More than once were they there, and the years of the
two,

When united, might number thirteen.

They sat by a grave that had never a stone

The name of the dead to determine ;

It was Life paying Death a brief visit—a known

And a notable text for a sermon.

They tenderly prattled ; ah, what did they say ?

The turf on that hillock was new :

Little Friends, did ye know aught of death or decay ?

Could the dead be regardful of you ?

I wish to believe, and believe it I must,

That her father beneath them was laid :

I wish to believe—I will take it on trust—

That father knew all that they said.

My own, you are five, very nearly the age
Of that poor little fatherless child ;
Ay, and some day a true-love your heart will engage,
When on earth I my last may have smiled.

Then visit my grave, like a good little lass,
Where'er it may happen to be ;
And if any daisies should peer through the grass,
O be sure they are kisses from me.

And place not a stone to distinguish my name,
For the stranger and gossip to see ;
But come with your lover, as these lovers came,
And talk to him sweetly of me.

And while you are smiling, One Greater will smile
On the dear little daughter He gave ;
—But mind, O yes, mind you are happy the while—
I wish you to visit my grave.

GERALDINE GREEN.

I.

THE SERENADE.

LIGHT slumber is quitting
The eyelids it prest ;
The fairies are flitting
Who charm'd thee to rest.
Where night dews were falling
Now feeds the wild bee ;
The starling is calling,
My darling, for thee.

The wavelets are crisper
That thrill the shy fern ;
The leaves fondly whisper,
“ We wait thy return.”

Arise then, and hazy
Distrust from thee fling,
For sorrows that crazy
To-morrows may bring.

A vague yearning smote us,
But wake not to weep ;
My bark, Love, shall float us
Across the still deep,
To isles where the lotus
Erst lull'd thee to sleep.

1861.

II.

MY LIFE IS A ———.

At Worthing an exile from Geraldine G——,
How aimless, how wretched an exile is he !
Promenades are not even prunella and leather
To lovers, if lovers can't foot them together.

He flies the parade ;—by ocean he stands ;
He traces a "Geraldine G." on the sands ;
Only "G. !" though her loved patronymic is "Green,"—
I will not betray thee, my own Geraldine.

The fortunes of men have a time and a tide,
And Fate, the old Fury, will not be denied ;
That name was, of course, soon wiped out by the sea,—
She jilted the exile, did Geraldine G.

They meet, but they never have spoken since that ;
He hopes she is happy,—he knows she is fat ;
She woo'd on the shore, now is wed in the Strand,—
And *I*—it was I wrote her name on the sand.

1854.

VANITY FAIR.

“**V**ANITAS vanitatum” has rung in the ears
Of gentle and simple for thousands of years ;
The wail still is heard, yet its notes never scare
Either simple or gentle from Vanity Fair.

I often hear people abusing it, yet
There the young go to learn and the old to forget ;
The mirth may be feigning, the sheen may be glare,
But the gingerbread’s gilded in Vanity Fair.

Old Dives there rolls in his chariot, but mind
Atra Cura is up with the lacqueys behind ;
Joan trudges with Jack,—are the sweethearts aware
Of the trouble that waits them in Vanity Fair ?

We saw them all go, and we something may learn
Of the harvest they reap when we see them return ;
The tree was enticing, its branches are bare,—
Heigho for the promise of Vanity Fair !

That stupid old Dives, once honest enough,
His honesty sold for star, ribbon, and stuff ;
And Joan's pretty face has been clouded with care
Since Jack bought *her* ribbons at Vanity Fair.

Contemptible Dives ! too credulous Joan !
Yet we all have a Vanity Fair of our own ;
My son, you have yours, but you need not despair,—
I own I've a weakness for Vanity Fair.

Philosophy halts, wisest counsels are vain,—
We go, we repent, we return there again ;
To-night you will certainly meet with us there—
So come and be merry in Vanity Fair.

1852.

BRAMBLE-RISE.

WHAT changes greet my wistful eyes
In quiet little Bramble-Rise,
The pride of all the shire !
How alter'd is each pleasant nook ;—
And used the dumpy church to look
So dumpy in the spire ?

This village is no longer mine ;
And though the Inn has changed its sign,
The beer may not be stronger :
The river, dwindled by degrees,
Is now a brook, the cottages
Are cottages no longer.

The mud is brick, the thatch is slate,
The pound has tumbled out of date,
And all the trees are stunted :
I'm sure these thistles once grew figs,
These geese were swans, and once these pigs
More musically grunted.

Where boys and girls pursued their sports
A locomotive puffs and snorts,
 And gets my malediction ;
The turf, the fairies—all are fled !
The ponds have shrunk, and tastes have spread
 For photograph and fiction.

Ah, there's a face I know again,
Fair Patty trotting down the lane
 To fetch a pail of water ;
Yes, Patty ! still I much suspect
'Tis not the child I recollect,
 But Patty,—Patty's daughter !

And has she too outlived the spells
Of breezy hills and silent dells
 Where childhood loved to ramble ?
Then Life was thornless to our ken,
And, Bramble-Rise, thy hills were then
 A rise without a bramble.

Whence comes the change ? 'Twere easy told
That some grow wise, and some grow cold,
 And all feel time and trouble :
If Life an empty bubble be,
How sad are those who will not see
 A rainbow in the bubble !

And senseless too, for Madam Fate
Is not the fickle reprobate
 That moody sages thought her ;
My heart leaps up, and I rejoice
As falls upon my ear thy voice,
 My frisky little daughter.

Come hither, Pussy, perch on these
Thy most unworthy father's knees,
 And tell him all about it !
Are dolls but bran ? Can men be base ?
When gazing on thy blessed face
 I'm quite prepared to doubt it.

O may'st thou own, my winsome elf,
Some day a pet just like thyself,
 Her sanguine thoughts to borrow ;
Content to use her brighter eyes,
Accept her childish ecstasies,—
 If need be, share her sorrow !

The wisdom of thy prattle cheers
This heart ; and when outworn in years,
 And homeward I am starting,
Lead me, my darling, gently down
To Life's dim strand : the skies may frown,
 —But weep not for our parting.

Though Life is call'd a doleful jaunt,
With sorrow fraught, in sunshine scant ;
Though earthly joys, the wisest grant,
 Have no enduring basis ;
It's pleasant in this lower sphere
(For her so fresh, for me so drear)
To find in Puss, my daughter dear,
 A little cool oasis !

April, 1857.

OLD LETTERS.

OLD letters ! wipe away the tear
For vows and wishes vainly worded ;
A pilgrim finds his journal here
Since first his youthful loins were girded.

Yes, here are wails from Clapham Grove ;
How could philosophy expect us
To live with Dr. Wise, and love
Rice pudding and the Greek Delectus ?

How strange to commune with the Dead !
Dead joys, dead loves ;—and wishes thwarted ;
Here's cruel proof of friendships fled ;
And sad enough of friends departed.

Yes, here's the offer that I wrote
In '33 to Lucy Diver ;
And here John Wylie's begging note,—
He never paid me back a stiver.

And here my feud with Major Spike,
Our bet about the French invasion ;
I must confess I acted like
A donkey upon that occasion.

Here's news from Paternoster Row ;
How mad I was when first I learnt it !
They would not take my Book, and now
I'd give a trifle to have burnt it.

A ghastly bill ! "I disapprove :"
And yet She help'd me to defray it :
What tokens of a mother's love !
O bitter thought ! I can't repay it.

And here's a score of notes at last,
With "love" and "dove," and "sever"
"never,"—
Though hope, though passion may be past,
Their perfume is as sweet as ever.

A human heart should beat for two,
Despite the taunt of single scorers ;
And all the hearths I ever knew
Had got a pair of chimney-corners.

See here a double violet—
Two locks of hair—a deal of scandal ;
I'll burn what only leaves regret—
Go, Betty, bring a lighted candle.

SUSAN.

I.

THE ALDER-TREES.

AT Susan's name the fancy plays
With chiming thoughts of early days,
And hearts unwrung ;
When all too fair our future smiled,
When she was Mirth's adopted child,
And I was young.

I see the cot with spreading eaves,
Bright shines the sun through summer leaves,
But does not scorch,
The dial stone, the pansy bed ;—
Old Robin train'd the roses red
About the porch.

'Twixt alders twain a rustic seat
Was merriest Susan's pet retreat
To merry make ;

Good Robin's handiwork again,—
O must we say his toil was vain,
For Susan's sake ?

Her gleeful tones and laughter gay
Were sunshine on the darkest day ;
And yet some said
That when her mirth was passing wild,
Though still the faithful Robin smiled,
He shook his head.

Perhaps the old man harbour'd fears
That happiness is wed with tears
On this poor earth ;
Or else, maybe, his fancies were
That youth and beauty are a snare
If link'd with mirth.

* * * * *

And times are changed, how changed that scene !
For mark old Robin's mournful mien,
And feeble tread.
His toil has ceased to be his pride,
At Susan's name he turns aside,
And shakes his head.

And summer smiles, but summer spells
Can never charm where sorrow dwells ;—
No maiden fair,

Or sad, or gay, the passer sees,—
And still the much-loved Alder-trees
Throw shadows there.

The homely-fashion'd seat is gone,
And where it stood is laid a stone,
A simple square :
The worldling, or the man severe,
May pass the name recorded here ;
But we will stay to shed a tear,
And breathe a prayer.

1855.

II.

A KIND PROVIDENCE.

He dropt a tear on Susan's bier,
He seem'd a most despairing swain ;
But bluer sky brought newer tie,
And—would he wish her back again?

The moments fly, and when we die,
Will Philly Thistletop complain?
She'll cry and sigh, and—dry her eye,
And let herself be woo'd again.

1861.

MY FIRST-BORN.

“ **H**E shan’t be their namesake, the rather
That both are such opulent men
His name shall be that of his father,
My Benjamin, shorten’d to Ben.

“ Yes, Ben, though it cost him a portion
In each of my relatives’ wills—
I scorn such baptismal extortion !
(That creaking of boots must be Squills).

“ It is clear, though his means may be narrow
This infant his age will adorn ;
I shall send him to Oxford from Harrow,—
I wonder how soon he’ll be born !”

A spouse thus was airing his fancies
Below—’twas a labour of love—
And was calmly reflecting on Nancy’s
More practical labour above ;

Yet while it so pleased him to ponder,
 Elated, at ease, and alone ;
The pale, patient victim up yonder
 Had budding delights of her own ;

Sweet thoughts, in their essence diviner
 Than paltry ambition and pelf ;
A cherub, no babe will be finer,
 Invented and nursed by herself.

One breakfasting, dining, and teeing,
 With appetite nought can appease ;
And quite a Young Reasoning Being
 When call'd on to yawn and to sneeze.

What cares that heart, trusting and tender,
 For fame or avuncular wills ?
Except for the name and the gender,
 She's almost as tranquil as Squills.

That father, in reverie centred,
 Dumfounder'd, his thoughts in a whirl,
Heard Squills, as the creaking boots enter'd,
 Announce that his Boy was—a Girl.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

A WIDOW ! she had only one,
A puny and decrepit son ;
Yet, day and night,
Though often fretful,—weak and small,
A loving child, he was her all—
The Widow's Mite.

The Widow's Mite, ay, so sustain'd,
She battled onward, nor complain'd
When friends were fewer :
And while she toil'd for daily fare,
A little crutch upon the stair
Was music to her.

I saw her then,—and now I see,
That though resign'd and cheerful, she
Has sorrow'd much :
She has—HE gave it tenderly—
Much faith—and, carefully laid by.
A little crutch.

ST. GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE.

“ Dans le bonheur de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons souvent quelque chose qui ne nous plaît pas entièrement.”

SHE pass'd up the aisle on the arm of her sire,
A delicate lady in bridal attire,
Fair emblem of virgin simplicity ;
Half London was there, and, my word, there were few
That stood by the altar, or hid in a pew,
But envied Lord Nigel's felicity.

O beautiful Bride! So meek in thy splendour,
So frank in thy love, and its trusting surrender,
Departing you leave us the town dim !
May happiness wing to thy bosom, unsought,
And may Nigel, esteeming his bliss as he ought,
Prove worthy thy worship,—confound him !

VÆ VICTIS.

“MY Kate, at the Waterloo Column,
To-morrow, precisely at eight ;
Remember, thy promise was solemn,
And—thine till to-morrow, my Kate !”

* * * * *

That evening seem'd strangely to linger,—
The license and luggage were pack'd ;
And Time, with a long and short finger,
Approvingly mark'd me exact.

Arrived, woman's constancy blessing,
No end of nice people I see ;
Some hither, some thitherwards pressing,—
But none of them waiting for me.

Time passes, my watch how I con it ;
I see her, she's coming—no, stuff !
Is it Kate and her smart little bonnet ?
—It's aunt, and her wonderful muff !

(Yes, Fortune deserves to be chidden ;
It is a coincidence queer
That whenever one wants to be hidden
One's relatives always appear.)

Near nine ! how the passers despise me,
They smile at my anguish, I think ;
And even the sentinel eyes me,
And tips that policeman the wink.

Ah ! Kate made me promises solemn,
At eight she had vow'd to be mine ;—
While waiting for one at this column,
I find I've been waiting for nine.

O Fame ! on thy pillar so steady,
Some dupes watch beneath thee in vain :—
How many have done it already !
How many will do it again !

PUBLISHED IN 1862



A HUMAN SKULL.

A HUMAN Skull ! I bought it passing cheap,—
Indeed 'twas dearer to its first employer ;—
I thought mortality did well to keep
Some mute memento of the Old Destroyer.

Time was, some may have prized its blooming skin ;
Here lips were woo'd, perhaps, in transport tender ;
Some may have chuck'd what was a dimpled chin,
And never had my doubt about its gender !

Did she live yesterday or ages back ?
What colour were the eyes when bright and waking ?
And were your ringlets fair, or brown, or black,
Poor little head ! that long has done with aching ?

It may have held (to shoot some random shots)
Thy brains, Eliza Fry !—or Baron Byron's ;
The wits of Nelly Gwynn, or Doctor Watts,—
Two quoted bards ! two philanthropic sirens !

But this I trust is clearly understood,
If man or woman,—if adored or hated,—
Whoever own'd the Skull was not so good,
Nor quite so bad as many may have stated.

Who love, can need no special type of Death ;
He bares his awful face too soon, too often ;
“ Immortelles ” bloom in Beauty's bridal wreath,
And does not yon green elm contain a coffin ?

O, true-love mine, what lines of care are these ?
The heart still lingers with its golden hours,
But fading tints are on the chestnut-trees,
And where is all that lavish wealth of flowers ?

The end is near. Life lacks what once it gave,
Yet death has promises that call for praises ;—
A very worthless rogue may dig the grave,
But hands unseen will dress the turf with daisies.

TO MY OLD FRIEND POSTUMUS.

(J. G.)

MY Friend, our few remaining years
Are hasting to an end,
They glide away, and lines are here
That time can never mend ;
Thy blameless life avails thee not,—
Alas, my dear old Friend !

Death lifts a burthen from the poor,
And brings the weary rest,
But aye from Earth's green orchard trees
The canker takes our best,
The Well-beloved ! she bloom'd, and now
The turf is on her breast !

And vainly are we fenced about
From peril, day and night,
Those awful rapids must be shot,
Our shallop will be slight ;
So pray that then we may descry
Some cheering beacon-light.

O pleasant earth ! This peaceful home !
The darling at my knee !
My own dear wife ! Thyself, old Friend !
And must it come to me
That any face shall fill my place
Unknown to them and thee ?

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

A LEGEND OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

SHE gave him a draught freshly drawn from the
springlet,—

O Tunbridge, thy waters are bitter, alas !

But love finds an ambush in dimple and ringlet ;

“Thy health, pretty maiden !”—He emptied the
glass.

He saw, and he loved her, nor cared he to quit her ;

The oftener he came, why the longer he stay'd ;

Indeed, though the spring was exceedingly bitter,

We found him eternally pledging the maid.

A *preux chevalier*, and but lately a cripple,

He met with his hurt where a regiment fell,

But worse was he wounded when staying to tippie

A bumper to “Phœbe, the Nymph of the Well.”

Some swore he was old, that his laurels were faded,
All vow'd she was vastly too nice for a nurse ;
But Love never look'd on the matter as they did,—
She took the brave soldier for better or worse.

And here is the home of her fondest election,
The walls may be worn, but the ivy is green ;
And here she has tenderly twined her affection
Around a true soldier who bled for the Queen.

See, yonder he sits, where the church flings its shadows ;
What child is that spelling the epitaphs there ?
To that imp its devout and devoted old dad owes
New zest in thanksgiving, fresh fervour in prayer !

Ere long, ay, too soon, a sad concourse will darken
The doors of that church, and that peaceful abode ;
His place then no longer will know him—but, hearken,
The widow and orphan appeal to their God.

Much peace will be hers. “ If our lot must be lowly,
Resemble thy father, though with us no more ; ”
And only on days that are high or are holy,
She'll show him the cross that her warrior wore.

So taught, he will rather take after his father,
And wear a long sword to our enemies' loss,
Till some day or other he'll bring to his mother
Victoria's gift—the Victoria Cross !

And still she'll be charming, though ringlet and dimple
Perchance may have lost their peculiar spell ;
And often she'll quote, with complacency simple,
The compliments paid to the Nymph of the Well.

.

And then will her darling, like all good and true ones,
Console and sustain her, the weak and the strong ;
And some day or other two black eyes or blue ones
Will smile on his path as he journeys along.

Wherever they win him, whoever his Phœbe,
Of course of all beauty she must be the *belle*,—
If at Tunbridge he chance to fall in with a Hebe,
He will not fall out with a draught from the Well.

“I MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE KIND.”

HER quiet resting-place is far away,
None dwelling there have wept for her sad
story :

The stones are mute. The stones could only say,
“A humble spirit pass’d away to glory.”

She loved the murmur of this mighty town,
The lark rejoiced her from its lattice prison ;
A streamlet soothes her now,—the bird has flown,—
Some dust is waiting there—a soul has risen.

No city smoke to stain the heather bells,—
Sigh, gentle winds, around my lone love sleeping,—
She bore her burthen here, but now she dwells
Where scorner never came, and none are weeping.

My name was falter’d with her parting breath—
These arms were round my darling at the latest :
All scenes of death are woe—but painful death
In those we dearly love is surely greatest !

I could not die : HE will'd it otherwise ;
My lot is here, and sorrow, wearing older,
Weighs down the heart, yet does not fill the eyes,
And even friends may think that I am colder.

I might have been more kind, more tender ; now
Repining wrings my bosom. I am grateful
No eye can see this mark upon my brow ;—
All, all my old companionship is hateful.

But when at times I steal away from these,
To find her grave, and pray to be forgiven,
And when I watch beside her on my knees,
I think I am a little nearer heaven.

1861.

THE ANGORA CAT.

GOOD pastry is vended
In Cité Fadette ;
Madame Pons can make splendid
Brioche and galette !

Monsieur Pons is so fat that
He's laid on the shelf ;
Madame Pons had a cat that
Was fat as herself.

Long hair, soft as satin,
A musical purr—
'Gainst the window she'd flatten
Her delicate fur.

Once I drove *Lou* to see what
Our neighbours were at,
When, in rapture, cried she, " What
An exquisite cat !

“What whiskers ! She’s purring
All over. Regale
Our eyes, Puss, by stirring
Your feathery tail !

“Monsieur Pons, will you sell her?”
“*Ma femme est sortie,*
Your offer I’ll tell her,
But—will she?” says he.

Yet Pons was persuaded
To part with the prize:
(Our bargain was aided,
My *Lou*, by your eyes !)

From his *légitime* save him,—
My fate I prefer !
For I warrant she gave him
Un mauvais quart d’heure.

I’m giving a pleasant
Grimalkin to *Lou*,—
Ah, Puss, what a present
I’m giving to you !

REPLY TO A LETTER ENCLOSING
A LOCK OF HAIR.

“ ‘ My darling wants to see you soon,’—
I bless the little maid, and thank her ;
To do her bidding, night and noon
I draw on Hope—Love’s kindest banker ! ”
Old MSS.

YES, you were false, and though I’m free,
I still would be the slave of yore ;
Then join’d our years were thirty-three,
And now,—yes, now, I’m thirty-four.
And though you were not learnèd—well,
I was not anxious you should grow so ;—
I trembled once beneath her spell
Whose spelling was extremely so-so !

Bright season ! why will Memory
Still haunt the path our rambles took,
The sparrow’s nest that made you cry,
The lilies captured in the brook ?
I’d lifted you from side to side,
You seem’d as light as that poor sparrow ;
I know who wish’d it twice as wide,
I think you thought it rather narrow.

Time was, indeed, a little while !

My pony could your heart compel ;
And once, beside the meadow-stile,

I thought you loved me just as well ;
I'd kiss'd your cheek ; in sweet surprise

Your troubled gaze said plainly, " Should he ?"
But doubt soon fled those daisy eyes,—

" He could not wish to vex me, could he ?"

The brightest eyes are often sad,

But your fair cheek, so lightly sway'd,
Could ripple into dimples glad,

For O, my stars, what mirth we made !
The brightest tears are soonest dried,
But your young love and dole were stable ;
You wept when dear old Rover died,
You wept—and dress'd your dolls in sable.

As year succeeds to year, the more

Imperfect life's fruition seems,
Our dreams, as baseless as of yore,
Are not the same enchanting dreams.

The girls I love now vote me slow—

How dull the boys who once seem'd witty !
Perhaps I'm getting old—I know
I'm still romantic—more's the pity !

Ah, vain regret ! to few, perchance,
Unknown, and profitless to all :
The wisely-gay, as years advance,
Are gaily-wise. Whate'er befall,
We'll laugh at folly, whether seen
Beneath a chimney or a steeple ;
At yours, at mine—our own, I mean,
As well as that of other people.

They cannot be complete in aught
Who are not humorously prone,—
A man without a merry thought
Can hardly have a funny bone.
To say I hate your dismal men
Might be esteem'd a strong assertion ;
If I've blue devils now and then,
I make them dance for my diversion.

And here's your letter debonair !
“ *My friend, my dear old friend of yore,*”
And is this curl your daughter's hair ?
I've seen the Titian tint before.
Are we the pair that used to pass
Long days beneath the chestnut shady ?
You then were such a pretty lass !
I'm told you're now as fair a lady.

I've laugh'd to hide the tear I shed,
As when the Jester's bosom swells,
And mournfully he shakes his head,
We hear the jingle of his bells.
A jesting vein your poet vex'd,
And this poor rhyme, the Fates determine,
Without a parson or a text,
Has proved a rather prosy sermon.

1859.

THE BEAR PIT

AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

WE liked the bear's serio-comical face,
As he loll'd with a lazy, a lumbering grace ;
Said Slyboots to me (just as if she had none),
“ Papa, let's give Bruin a bit of your bun.”

Says I, “ A plum bun might please wistful old Bruin,
He can't eat the stone that the cruel boy threw in ;
Stick yours on the point of mamma's parasol,
And perhaps he will climb to the top of the pole.

“ Some bears have got two legs, and some have got
more,
Be good to old bears if they've no legs or four ;
Of duty to age you should never be careless,
My dear, I am bald, and I soon may be hairless !

“ The gravest aversion exists among bears
For rude forward persons who give themselves airs,
We know how some graceless young people they
maul'd
Just for plaguing a prophet, and calling him bald.

“Strange ursine devotion ! Their dancing-days ended,
Bears die to ‘remove’ what, in life, they defended :
They succour’d the Prophet, and since that affair
The bald have a painful regard for the bear.”

My Moral—Small People may read it, and run
(The child has my moral, the bear has my bun),
Does it argue that Bruin has never had peace
’Twixt bald men in Bethel, and wise men in grease?

MY NEIGHBOUR ROSE.

THOUGH slender walls our hearths divide,
No word has pass'd from either side,
How gaily all your days must glide
Unvex'd by labour !
I've seen you weep, and could have wept ;
I've heard you sing, and may have slept ;
Sometimes I hear your chimney swept,
My charming neighbour !

Your pets are mine. Pray what may ail
The pup, once eloquent of tail ?
I wonder why your nightingale
Is mute at sunset ?
Your puss, demure and pensive, seems
Too fat to mouse. She much esteems
Yon sunny wall, and sleeps and dreams
Of mice she once ate.

Our tastes agree. I dote upon
Frail jars, turquoise and celadon,
The "Wedding March" of Mendelssohn,
And *Penseroso*.

When sorely tempted to purloin
Your *pietà* of Marc Antoine,
Fair Virtue doth fair play enjoin,
Fair Virtuoso !

At times an Ariel, cruel-kind,
Will kiss my lips, and stir your blind,
And whisper low, "She hides behind ;
Thou art not lonely."

The tricky sprite did erst assist
At hush'd Verona's moonlight tryst ;—
Sweet Capulet ! thou wert not kiss'd
By light winds only.

I miss the simple days of yore,
When two long braids of hair you wore,
And *chat botté* was wonder'd o'er,
In corner cosy.

But gaze not back for tales like those :
It's all in order, I suppose,
The Bud is now a blooming ROSE,—
A rosy posy !

Indeed, farewell to bygone years ;
How wonderful the change appears,
For curates now and cavaliers

In turn perplex you :
The last are birds of feather gay,
Who swear the first are birds of prey ;
I'd scare them all had I my way,
But that might vex you.

At times I've envied, it is true,
That hero blithe, of twenty-two,
Who sent *bouquets* and *billets doux*,
And wore a sabre.

The rogue ! how close his arm he wound
About her waist, who never frown'd.
He loves you, Child. Now, is he bound
To love *my* neighbour?

The bells are ringing. As is meet,
White favours fascinate the street,
Sweet faces greet me, rueful-sweet
'Twixt tears and laughter :
They crowd the door to see her go,
The bliss of one brings many woe ;
O kiss the bride, and I will throw
The old shoe after.

What change in one short afternoon,—
My Charming Neighbour gone,—so soon !
Is yon pale orb her honey-moon

Slow rising hither?

O lady, wan and marvellous,
How often have we communed thus ;
Sweet memory shall dwell with us,—
And joy go with her !

1861.

THE OLD OAK-TREE AT HATFIELD
BROADOAK.

A MIGHTY growth ! The county side
Lamented when the Giant died,
For England loves her trees :
What misty legends round him cling !
How lavishly he once would fling
His acorns to the breeze !

Who struck a thousand roots in fame,
Who gave the district half its name,
Will not be soon forgotten :
Last spring he show'd but one green bough,
The red leaves hang there still, and now
His very props are rotten !

Elate, the thunderbolt he braved,
For centuries his branches waved
A welcome to the blast ;
From reign to reign he bore a spell—
No forester had dared to fell
What Time has fell'd at last.

The monarch wore a leafy crown,
And wolves, ere wolves were hunted down,
Sought safety in his gloom;
Unnumber'd squirrels frolick'd free,
Glad music fill'd the gallant tree
From stem to topmost bloom.

'Twere hard to say, 'twere vain to seek
When first he ventured forth, a meek
Petitioner for dew;
No Saxon spade disturb'd his root,
The rabbit spared the tender shoot,
And valiantly he grew,

And show'd some inches from the ground
When St. Augustine came and found
Us very proper Vandals:
When nymphs had bluer eyes than hose,
When England measured men by blows,
And measured time by candles.

The pilgrim bless'd his grateful shade
Ere Richard led the first crusade,
And maidens led the dance
Where, boy and man, in summer-time,
Our Chaucer ponder'd o'er his rhyme;
And Robin Hood perchance,

Stole hither to maid Marian
(And if they did not come, one can
At any rate suppose it) ;
They met beneath the mistletoe,—
We did the same, and ought to know
The reason why they chose it.

And this was call'd the traitor's branch,
Stern Warwick hung six yeomen stanch
Along its mighty fork ;
Uncivil wars for them ! The fair
Red rose and white still bloom,—but where
Are Lancaster and York ?

Right mournfully his leaves he shed
To shroud the graves of England's dead,
By English falchion slain ;
And cheerfully, for England's sake,
He sent his kin to sea with Drake,
When Tudor humbled Spain.

While Blake was fighting with the Dutch
They gave his poor old arms a crutch ;
And thrice four maids and men ate
A meal within his rugged bark,
When Coventry bewitch'd the Park,
And Chatham sway'd the senate.

His few remaining boughs were green,
And dappled sunbeams danced between,
 Upon the dappled deer,
When, clad in black, two mourners met
To read the Waterloo Gazette,—
 They mourn'd their darling here.

They join'd their boy. The tree at last
Lies prone, discoursing of the past,
 Some fancy-dreams awaking ;
Resign'd, though headlong changes come,
Though nations arm to tuck of drum,
 And dynasties are quaking.

Romantic spot ! By honest pride
Of old tradition sanctified ;
 My pensive vigil keeping,
I feel thy beauty like a spell,
And thoughts, and tender thoughts, upwell,
 That fill my heart to weeping.

* * * * *

The Squire affirms, with gravest look,
His oak goes up to Domesday Book !
 And some say even higher !
We rode last week to see the ruin,
We love the fair domain it grew in,
 And well we love the Squire.

A nature loyally controll'd,
And fashion'd in the righteous mould
Of English gentleman ;
Some day my child will read these rhymes,
She loved her "godpapa" betimes,—
The little Christian !

I love the Past, its ripe pleasànce,
Its lusty thought, and dim romance,
And heart-compelling ditties ;
But more, these ties, in mercy sent,
With faith and true affection blent,
And, wanting them, I were content
To murmur, "*Nunc dimittis*."

HALLINGBURY, *April*, 1859.

TO MY GRANDMOTHER.

(SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE BY MR. ROMNEY.)

THIS relative of mine
Was she seventy and nine
When she died ?
By the canvas may be seen,
How she look'd at seventeen,
As a bride.

Beneath a summer tree
Her maiden reverie
Has a charm ;
Her ringlets are in taste ;
What an arm ! and what a waist
For an arm !

With her bridal-wreath, bouquet,
Lace, farthingale, and gay
Falbala,
—Were Romney's limning true,
What a lucky dog were you,
Grandpapa !

Her lips are sweet as love ;
They are parting ! Do they move ?
Are they dumb ?
Her eyes are blue, and beam
Beseechingly, and seem
To say, " Come."

What funny fancy slips
From between these cherry lips ?
Whisper me,
Sweet deity in paint,
What canon says I mayn't
Marry thee ?

That good-for-nothing Time
Has a confidence sublime !
When I first
Saw this lady, in my youth,
Her winters had, forsooth,
Done their worst.

Her locks, as white as snow,
Once shamed the swarthy crow :
By-and-by,
That fowl's avenging sprite
Set his cruel foot for spite
Near her eye.

Her rounded form was lean,
And her silk was bombazine :—
 Well I wot,
With her needles would she sit,
And for hours would she knit,—
 Would she not ?

Ah, perishable clay !
Her charms had dropt away
 One by one :
But if she heaved a sigh
With a burthen, it was, “ Thy
 Will be done.”

In travail, as in tears,
With the fardel of her years
 Overprest,—
In mercy she was borne
Where the weary and the worn
 Are at rest.

I fain would meet you there ;—
If witching as you were,
 Grandmamma,
This nether world agrees
That the better you must please
 Grandpapa.

THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD.

THE characters of great and small
Come ready made (we can't bespeak one);
Their sides are many, too,—and all
 (Except ourselves) have got a weak one.
Some sanguine people love for life,
 Some love their hobby till it flings them,—
How many love a pretty wife
 For love of the *éclat* she brings them !

In order to relieve my mind
 I've thrown off this disjointed chatter,
And much because I'm disinclined
 To venture on a painful matter :
I once was bashful ; I'll allow
 I've blush'd for words untimely spoken,
I still am rather shy, and now . . .
 And now the ice is fairly broken.

We all have secrets : you have one
Which mayn't be quite your charming spouse's ;
We all lock up a skeleton
In some grim chamber of our houses ;
Familiars who exhaust their days
And nights in plaguing fops and fogies,
And who, excepting spiteful ways,
Are blameless, unassuming bogies.

We hug the phantom we detest,
We rarely let it cross our portals :
It is a most exacting guest,—
Now are we not afflicted mortals ?
Your neighbour Gay, that jovial wight,
As Dives rich, and bold as Hector,
Poor Gay steals twenty times a night,
On shaking knees, to see his spectre.

Old Dives fears a pauper fate,
And hoarding is his gloomy passion ;
And some poor souls anticipate
A waistcoat straiter than the fashion.
She, childless, pines,—that lonely wife,
And hidden tears are bitter shedding ;
And he may tremble all his life,
And die,—but not of that he's dreading.

Ah me, the World ! How fast it spins !
The beldams dance, the caldron bubbles ;
They shriek, and stir it for our sins,
And we must drain it for our troubles.
We toil, we groan—the cry for love
Mounts upward from the seething city,
And yet I know we have above
A FATHER, infinite in pity.

When Beauty smiles, when Sorrow weeps,
When sunbeams play, when shadows darken,
One inmate of our dwelling keeps
A ghastly carnival—but hearken !
How dry the rattle of the bones !—
The sound was not to make you start meant.
Stand by ! Your humble servant owns
The Tenant of this Dark Apartment.

GLYCERE.

OLD MAN.

IN gala dress, and smiling ! Sweet,
What seek you in my green retreat ?

YOUNG GIRL.

I gather flowers for my hair,
The village yonder claims the best,
For lad and lass are thronging there
To dance the sober sun to rest.
Hark ! hark ! the rebec calls,—Glycere
Again may foot it on the green ;
Her rivalry I need not fear,
This wreath shall crown the Village Queen.

OLD MAN.

You long have known this tranquil ground ?

YOUNG GIRL.

Indeed it all seems marr'd to me.

OLD MAN.

Light heart ! who sleeps beneath this mound
Was fairest of yon company :
The flowers to eclipse Glycerie
Are hers, poor child. Her grave is here !

THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

THE SUTTEE.

A *CROSSING-SWEEPER, black and tan,
Told how he came from Hindostan,
And why he wore a hat, and shunn'd
The Ryals of the Pugree Bund.*

My wife was fair, she worshipp'd me,
Her father was a Caradee,
His deity was aquatile,
A rough and tough old Crocodile.

To gratify this monster's maw
He sacrificed his sons-in-law;
I married, though the neighbours said he
Had *lost* five sons-in-law already.

Her father, when he play'd his pranks,
Proposed "a *turn* on Jumna's banks;"
He spoke so kind, she seem'd so glum,
I felt convinced that mine had come.

I fled before this artful ruse
To cook my too-confiding goose,
And now I sweep, in chill despair,
A crossing in St. James's Square ;

Some old *Qui-hy*, some rural flat
May drop a sixpence in my hat ;
Yet still I mourn the mango-tree
Where Azla first grew fond of me.

These rogues, who swear my skin is tawny,
Would pawn their own for brandy-pawnee ;
What matter if their skins are snowy,—
As Chloe fair ? They're drunk as Chloe !

Your town is vile. In Thames's stream
The crocodiles get up the steam !
Your Juggernauts their victims bump
From Camberwell to Aldgate pump !

A year ago, come Candlemas,
I woo'd a plump Feringhee lass ;
United at her idol fane,
I furnish'd rooms in Idol Lane.

A moon had waned when virtuous Emma
Involved me in a new dilemma :
The Brahma faith, that Emma scorns,
Impaled me tight on both its horns :

She vow'd to BURN if she survived me;
Of this sweet fancy she deprived me,
She ran from all her obligations,
And went to stay with her relations.

My Azla weeps by Jumna's deeps,
But Emma mocks my trials,
She pokes her jokes in Seven Oaks,
At me in Seven Dials,—
I'm *dash'd* if these Feringhee folks
Ain't rather worse than Ryals.

A SONG THAT WAS NEVER SUNG.

“THE well-beloved are only dead
To idle mirth and sorrow,
Regretful tears for what is fled,
And yearnings for to-morrow.”—
Alas, that love should know alloy ;
How frail the cup that holds our joy !

“How sweet, how passing sweet to rove
Through fields of asphodel ;
Where all we’ve lost, and all who love,
Rejoice !”—Ah, who can tell ?
Yet sweet it were, knit hand in hand,
To lead thee through a better land.

Why wish the fleeting year to stay ?
When time for us is flown,
There is a garden,—far away,
An Eden all our own :
And there I’ll whisper in thine ear—
Ah ! what I may not tell thee here !

PUBLISHED IN 1865

ON AN OLD MUFF.

TIME has a magic wand !
What is it meets my hand,
Moth-eaten, mouldy, and
Cover'd with fluff ?
Faded, and stiff, and scant ;
Can it be ? no, it can't—
Yes,—I declare it's Aunt
Prudence's Muff !

Years ago, twenty-three,
Old Uncle Barnaby
Gave it to Aunt P.
Laughing and teasing—
“ Pru., of the breezy curls,
Whisper those solemn churls,
What holds a pretty girl's
Hand without squeezing ? ”

Uncle was then a lad
Gay, but, I grieve to add,
Sinful ; if smoking bad
Baccy's a vice :

Glossy was then this mink
Muff, lined with pretty pink
Satin, which maidens think
“Awfully nice !”

I seem to see again
Aunt, in her hood and train,
Glide, with a sweet disdain,
Gravely to Meeting :
Psalm-book, and kerchief new,
Peep'd from the Muff of Pru. ;
Young men, and pious too,
Giving her greeting.

Sweetly her Sabbath sped
Then, from this Muff, it's said,
Tracts she distributed :—
Converts (till Monday !)
Lured by the grace they lack'd,
Follow'd her. One, in fact,
Ask'd for—and got his tract
Twice of a Sunday !

Love has a potent spell ;
Soon this bold Ne'er-do-well,
Aunt's too susceptible
Heart undermining,

Slipt, so the scandal runs,
Notes in the pretty nun's
Muff, triple-corner'd ones,
 Pink as its lining.

Worse follow'd, soon the jade
Fled, (to oblige her blade !)
Whilst her friends thought that they'd
 Lock'd her up tightly :
After such shocking games
Aunt is of wedded dames
Gayest, and now her name's
 Mrs. Golightly.

In female conduct flaw
Sadder I never saw,
Faith still I've in the law
 Of compensation.
Once Uncle went astray,
Smoked, joked, and swore away,
Sworn by, he's now, by a
 Large congregation.

Changed is the Child of Sin,
Now he's (he once was thin)
Grave, with a double chin,—
 Blest be his fat form !

Changed is the garb he wore,
Preacher was never more
Prized than is Uncle for
Pulpit or platform.

If all's as best befits
Mortals of slender wits,
Then beg the Muff, and its
Fair Owner pardon :
All's for the best, indeed
Such is *my* simple creed,
Still I must go and weed
Hard in my garden.

1863.

AN INVITATION TO ROME, AND
THE REPLY.

THE INVITATION.

O COME to Rome, it is a pleasant place,
Your London sun is here seen smiling brightly :
The Briton too puts on a cheery face,
And Mrs. Bull is suave and even sprightly.
The Romans are a kind and cordial race,
The women charming, if one takes them rightly ;
I see them at their doors, as day is closing,
More proud than duchesses—and more imposing.

A *far niente* life promotes the graces ;
They pass from dreamy bliss to wakeful glee,
And in their bearing, and their speech, one traces
A breadth of grace and depth of courtesy
That are not found in more inclement places ;
Their clime and tongue seem much in harmony ;
The Cockney met in Middlesex, or Surrey,
Is often cold—and always in a hurry.

Though *far niente* is their passion, they
Seem here most eloquent in things most slight ;
No matter what it is they have to say,
The manner always sets the matter right :
And when they've plagued or pleased you all the day,
They sweetly wish you " a most happy night."
Then, if they fib, and if their stories tease you,
'Tis always something that they've wish'd to please
you !

O come to Rome, nor be content to read
Alone of stately palace and of street
Whose fountains ever run with joyful speed,
And never-ceasing murmur. Here we meet
Great Memnon's monoliths, or, gay with weed,
Rich capitals, as corner-stone, or seat,
The sites of vanish'd temples, where now moulder
Old ruin, hiding ruin even older.

Ay, come, and see the statues, pictures, churches,
Although the last are commonplace, or florid.
Some say 'tis here that superstition perches,
Myself I'm glad the marbles have been quarried.
The sombre streets are worthy your researches :
The ways are foul, the lava pavement's horrid,
But pleasant sights, that squeamishness disparages,
Are miss'd by all who roll about in carriages.

Anent one fane I deprecate all sneering,
For during Christmas-time I went there daily,
Amused, or edified, or both, by hearing
The little preachers of the *Ara Cæli*.
Conceive a four-year-old *bambina* rearing
Her small form on a rostrum,—trick'd out gaily,
And lisping, what for doctrine may be frightful,
With action most dramatic and delightful.

O come ! We'll charter such a pair of nags !
The country's better seen when one is riding :
We'll roam where yellow Tiber speeds or lags
At will. The aqueducts are yet bestriding
With giant march (now whole, now broken crags
With flowers plumed) the swelling and subsiding
Campagna, girt by purple hills, afar—
That melt in light beneath the evening star.

A drive to Palestrina will be pleasant,
The wild fig grows where erst her rampart stood ;
There oft, in goat-skin clad, a sun-burnt peasant
Like Pan comes frisking from his ilex wood,
And seems to wake the past time in the present.
Fair *contadina*, mark his mirthful mood,
No antique satyr he. The nimble fellow
Can join with jollity your *saltarello*.

Old sylvan peace and liberty ! The breath
Of life to unsophisticated man.
Here Mirth may pipe, here Love may weave his
wreath,
“*Per dar' al mio bene.*” When you can,
Come share their leafy solitudes. Pale Death
And Time are grudging of our little span :
Wan Time speeds lightly o'er the changing corn,
Death grins from yonder cynical old thorn.

I dare not speak of Michael Angelo—
Such theme were all too splendid for my pen.
And if I breathe the name of Sanzio
(The brightest of Italian gentlemen),
Is it that love casts out my fear, and so
I claim with him a kindredship ? Ah ! when
We love, the name is on our hearts engraven,
As is thy name, my own dear Bard of Avon !

Nor is the Coliseum theme of mine,
'Twas built for poet of a larger daring ;
The world goes there with torches, I decline
Thus to affront the moonbeams with their flaring.
Some time in May our forces we'll combine
(Just you and I), and try a midnight airing,
And then I'll quote this rhyme to you—and then
You'll muse upon the vanity of men.

O come ! I send a leaf of April fern,
It grew where Beauty lingers round decay :
The ashes buried in a sculptured urn
Are not more dead than Rome—so dead to-day !
That better time, for which the patriots yearn,
Enchants the gaze, again to fade away.
They wait and pine for what is long denied,
And thus I wait till thou art by my side.

Thou'rt far away ! Yet, while I write, I still
Seem gently, Sweet, to press thy hand in mine ;
I cannot bring myself to drop the quill,
I cannot yet thy little hand resign !
The plain is fading into darkness chill,
The Sabine peaks are flush'd with light divine,
I watch alone, my fond thought wings to thee ;
O come to Rome—O come, O come to me !

1863.

THE REPLY.

Dear Exile, I was pleased to get
Your rhyme, I've laid it up in cotton ;
You know that you are all to " Pet,"
She fear'd that she was quite forgotten !

Mamma, who scolds me when I mope,
Insists—mamma is wise as gentle—
That I am still in love. I hope
That you feel rather sentimental.

Perhaps you think your *Love forlore*
Should pine unless her slave be with her ;
Of course you're fond of Rome, and, more—
Perhaps you'd like to coax me thither !
Che! quit this dear delightful maze
Of calls and balls, to be intensely
Discomfited in fifty ways—
I like your confidence immensely !

Some girls who love to ride and race,
And live for dancing—like the Bruens,
Confess that Rome's a charming place,
In spite of all the stupid ruins :
I think it might be sweet to pitch
One's tent beside the banks of Tiber,
And all that sort of thing, of which
Dear Hawthorne's "quite" the best describer.

To see stone pines, and marble gods,
In garden alleys, red with roses,
The Perch where Pio Nono nods ;
The Church where Raphael reposes.
Make pleasant *giros*—when we may ;
Jump *stagionate*—where they're easy ;

And play croquet—the Bruens say
There's turf behind the Ludovisi.

I'll bring my books, though Mrs. Mee
Says packing books is such a worry ;
I'll bring my "Golden Treasury,"
Manzoni, and, of course, a "Murray ;"
A Tupper, whom good people prize ;
A Dante—Auntie owns a quarto—
I'll try and buy a smaller size,
And read him on the *muro torto*.

But can I go? *La Madre* thinks
It would be such an undertaking :
I wish we could consult a sphinx ;
The thought alone has left her quaking.
Papa (we do not mind Papa)
Has got some "notice" of some "motion,"
And could not stay ; but, why not,—Ah,
I've not the very slightest notion.

The Browns have come to stay a week,
They've brought the boys, I haven't thank'd 'em,
For Baby *Grand*, and Baby *Pic*,
Are playing cricket in my sanctum :
Your Rover, too, affects my den,
And when I pat the dear old whelp, it . .
It makes me think of you, and then . .
And then I cry—I cannot help it.

Ah yes—before you left me, ere
Our separation was impending,
These eyes had seldom shed a tear,—
I thought my joy could have no ending !
But cloudlets gather'd soon, and this,
This was the first that rose to grieve me—
To know that I possess'd such bliss,—
For then I knew such bliss might leave me.

My thoughts are sadder than my rhymes !
But yours have made my spirit better :
And though perhaps I grieve at times,
I'd meant to write a cheery letter ;
But skies were dull, Rome sounded hot,
I fancied I could live without it :
I thought I'd go, I thought I'd not,
And then I thought I'd think about it.

The sun now glances o'er the Park,
If tears are on my cheek, they glitter ;
I think I've kiss'd your rhyme, for hark,
My “ bulley ” gives a saucy twitter !
Your blessed words extinguish doubt,
A sudden breeze is gaily blowing,
And, hark ! The minster bells ring out—
“ She ought to go. Of course she's going ! ”

GERALDINE.

A SIMPLE child has claims
On your sentiment—her name's
Geraldine.

Be tender, but beware,—
She's frolicsome as fair,—
And fifteen.

She has gifts to grace allied,
Each gift she has applied,
And improved :
She has bliss that lives and leans
On loving, and that means—
She is loved.

Her grace is grace refined
By sweet harmony of mind :
And the Art,
And the blessed Nature, too,
Of a tender and a true
Little heart.

And yet I must not vault
Over any foolish fault
That she owns :
Or others might rebel,
And enviously swell
In their zones.

She is tricky as the fays,
Or her pussy when it plays
With a string :
She's a goose about her cat,
Her ribbons, and all that
Sort of thing.

These foibles are a blot,
Still she never can do what
Is not nice,
Such as quarrel, and give slaps—
As I've known her get, perhaps,
Once or twice.

The spells that move her soul
Are subtle—sad or droll :
She can show
That virtuoso whim
Which consecrates our dim
Long-ago.

A love that is not sham
For Stothard, Blake, and Lamb ;
 And I've known
Cordelia's wet eyes
Cause angel-tears to rise
 In her own.

Her gentle spirit yearns
When she reads of Robin Burns—
 Luckless Bard,
Had she blossom'd in thy time,
O how rare had been the rhyme
 —And reward !

Thrice happy then is he
Who, planting such a Tree,
 Sees it bloom
To shelter him—indeed
We have sorrow as we speed
 To our doom !

I am happy having grown
Such a Sapling of my own ;
 And I crave
No garland for my brows,
But peace beneath its boughs
 To the grave.

THE HOUSEMAID.

“ Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide.”

A LONE she sits, with air resign'd
She watches by the window-blind :
Poor girl ! No doubt
The pilgrims here despise thy lot :
Thou canst not stir, because 'tis not
Thy *Sunday out*.

To play a game of hide and seek
With dust and cobweb all the week,
Small pleasure yields :
O dear, how nice it is to drop
One's pen and ink, one's pail and mop—
And scour the fields !

Poor Bodies few such pleasures know ;
They seldom come. How soon they go !
But Souls can roam :
And, lapt in visions airy-sweet,
She sees perchance in this dull street
Her own loved home !

The road is now no road. She pranks
A brawling stream with thymy banks ;
 In Fancy's realm
This post supports no lamp, aloof
It spreads above her parents' roof,
 A gracious elm.

How often has she valued there
A father's aid, a mother's care :
 She now has neither :
And yet she sits, and fondly dreams,
And fondly smiles on one who seems
 More dear than either.

The poor can love through want and pain,
Although their homely speech is fain
 To halt in fetters :
They feel as much, and do far more
Than some of those they bow before,
 Miscall'd their *betters*.

Oft on a cloudless afternoon
Of budding May and leafy June,
 Meet Sunday weather,
I pass her window by design,
And wish her *Sunday out* and mine
 Might fall together.

For sweet it were my lot to dower
With one brief joy, one white-robed flower ;
 And prude, or preacher,
Could hardly deem I did amiss
To lay one on the path of this
 Forlorn young creature.

Yet if her thought on wooing run,
And if her swain and she are one,
 And fancy strolling,
She'd like my nonsense less than his,
And so it's better as it is—
 And that's consoling.

Her whereabouts I won't disclose !
Suppose she's fair, her name suppose
 Is *Car*, or *Kitty* ;
She may be *Jane*—she might be plain—
For must the object of my strain
 Be always pretty ?

1864.

THE JESTER'S PLEA.

These verses were published in 1862, in a volume of Poems (by several hands), entitled "An Offering to Lancashire."

THE World's a sorry wench, akin
To all that's frail and frightful :
The World's as ugly—ay, as Sin,
And nearly as delightful !
The World's a merry world (*pro tem.*),
And some are gay, and therefore
It pleases them, but some condemn
The World they do not care for.

The World's an ugly world. Offend
Good people, how they wrangle !
The manners that they never mend,
The characters they mangle !
They eat, and drink, and scheme, and plod,
And go to church on Sunday ;
And many are afraid of God—
And more of *Mrs. Grundy*.

The time for Pen and Sword was when
 " My ladye fayre," for pity
Could tend her wounded knight, and then
 Be tender at his ditty.
Some ladies now make pretty songs,
 And some make pretty nurses :
Some men are great at righting wrongs,—
 And some at writing verses.

I wish we better understood
 The tax that poets levy !
I know the Muse is *goody good*,
 I think she's rather heavy :
She now compounds for winning ways
 By morals of the sternest,
Methinks the lays of nowadays
 Are painfully in earnest.

When Wisdom halts, I humbly try
 To make the most of Folly :
If Pallas be unwilling, I
 Prefer to flirt with Polly ;
To quit the goddess for the maid
 Seems low in lofty musers ;
But Pallas is a lofty jade—
 And beggars can't be choosers.

I do not wish to see the slaves
Of party, stirring passion,
Or psalms quite superseding staves,
Or piety "the fashion."
I bless the hearts where pity glows,
Who, here together banded,
Are holding out a hand to those
That wait so empty-handed !

A righteous Work ! My masters, may
A Jester by confession,
Scarce noticed join, half sad, half gay,
The close of your procession ?
The motley here seems out of place
With graver robes to mingle,
But if one tear bedews his face,
Forgive the bells their jingle.

TO MY MISTRESS.

O COUNTESS, year succeeding year
Can show that Time is wasting here :
He soon will do his worst by you,
And garner all your roses too.

It pleases Time to fold his wings
Around our best and brightest things ;
He'll mar your damask cheek, as now
He stamps his mark upon my brow.

The same mute planets rise and shine
To rule your days and nights as mine :
Once I was young as you,—and see ! . .
What I am now you soon will be.

And yet I bear a certain charm
That shields me from your worst alarm ;
And bids me gaze, with front sublime,
On all the ravages of Time.

You boast a charm that all men prize :
This gift of mine, that you despise,
May, like enough, be still my own
When all your vaunt has paled and gone.

My charm may long embalm the lures
Of eyes,—ah, sweet to me as yours :
And ages hence the great and good
Will judge you as I choose they should.

In days to come the count or clown,
With whom I still shall win renown,
Will only know that you were fair
Because I chanced to say you were.

Proud Lady ! scornful beauty mocks
At aged heads and silver locks ;
But think awhile before you try
To scorn a poet such as I.

KENWOOD, *July* 21, 1864.

MY MISTRESS'S BOOTS.

THEY nearly strike me dumb,
And I tremble when they come
Pit-a-pat :
This palpitation means
That these Boots are Geraldine's—
Think of that !

O where did hunter win
So delectable a skin
For her feet ?
You lucky little kid,
You perish'd, so you did,
For my sweet !

The faery stitching gleams
On the sides, and in the seams,
And it shows
That the Pixies were the wags
Who tipt these funny tags,
And these toes.

The simpletons who squeeze
Their extremities to please
Mandarins,
Would positively flinch
From venturing to pinch
Geraldine's.

What soles to charm an elf !
Had Crusoe, sick of self,
Chanced to view
One printed near the tide,
O how hard he would have tried
For the two !

For Gerry's debonair,
And innocent, and fair
As a rose :
She's an angel in a frock,
With a fascinating cock
To her nose.

Cinderella's *lefts and rights*
To Geraldine's were frights :
And, I trow,
The damsel, deftly shod,
Has dutifully trod
Until now.

Come, Gerry, since it suits
Such a pretty Puss (in Boots)
These to don,
Set this dainty hand awhile
On my shoulder, dear, and I'll
Put them on.

ALBURY, *June 29*, 1864.

THE ROSE AND THE RING.

(Christmas 1854, and Christmas 1863.)

SHE smiles, but her heart is in sable,
Ay, sad as her Christmas is chill :
She reads, and her book is the fable
He penn'd for her while she was ill.
It is nine years ago since he wrought it,
Where reedy old Tiber is king ;
And chapter by chapter he brought it,
And read her the Rose and the Ring.

And when it was printed, and gaining
Renown with all lovers of glee,
He sent her this copy containing
His comical little *croquis* ;
A sketch of a rather droll couple,
She's pretty, he's quite t'other thing !
He begs (with a spine vastly supple)
She will study the Rose and the Ring.

It pleased the kind Wizard to send her
The last and the best of his toys ;
His heart had a sentiment tender
For innocent women and boys :
And though he was great as a scorner,
The guileless were safe from his sting :
O how sad is past mirth to the mourner !
A tear on the Rose and the Ring !

She reads, I may vainly endeavour
Her mirth-chequer'd grief to pursue,
For she hears she has lost, and for ever,
A heart that was known by so few ;
But I wish on the shrine of his glory
One fair little blossom to fling ;
And you see there's a nice little story
Attach'd to the Rose and the Ring !

1863.

These verses were published in 1863, in "A Welcome," dedicated to the Princess of Wales.

THE town despises modern lays :
The foolish town is frantic
For story-books that tell of days
That time has made romantic :
Of days whose chiefest lore lies chill
And dead in crypt and barrow ;
When soldiers were, as Loves are still—
Content with bow and arrow.

But why should we the fancy chide ?
The world will always hunger
To know how people lived and died
When all the world was younger.
We like to read of knightly parts
In maidenhood's distresses,
Of tryst with sunshine in light hearts,
And moonbeam on dark tresses ;

And how, when *errante-knyghte* or *erl*
Proved well the love he gave her,
She sent him scarf or silken curl,
As earnest of her favour ;
And how (the Fair at times were rude !)
Her knight, ere homeward riding,
Would take, and, ay, with gratitude,
His lady's silver chiding.

We love the rare old days and rich,
That poesy has painted ;
We mourn the good old times with which
We never were acquainted.
To-day a lady tried to prove,
And not a lady youthful,
“ Ah, once it was no crime to love,
Nor folly to be truthful ! ”

Pooh ! Damsels then in castles dwelt,
Nor dared to show their noses :
Then passion that could not be spelt,
Was hinted at in posies.
Such shifts make modern Cupid laugh :—
Now sweethearts, in love's tremor,
Can tell their vows by telegraph,
And go off in the steamer !

The earth is yet our Mother Earth,
Young shepherds yet fling capers
In flowery groves that ring with mirth,
Where old ones read the papers.
Romance, as tender and as true,
Our Isle has never quitted :
So lad and lassie when they woo
Are hardly to be pitied !

O yes ! young love is lovely yet,
With faith and honour plighted :
I love to see a pair so met,
Youth—Beauty—all united.
Such dear ones may they ever wear
The roses Fortune gave them :
Ah, know we such a Blessed Pair ?
I think we do ! GOD SAVE THEM !

Our lot is cast on pleasant days,
In not unpleasant places—
Young ladies now have pretty ways,
As well as pretty faces ;
So never sigh for what has been,
And let us cease complaining
That we have loved when Our Dear Queen
VICTORIA was reigning !

MRS. SMITH.

LAST year I trod these fields with Di,
And that's the simple reason why
They now seem arid :
Then Di was fair and single ; how
Unfair it seems on me, for now
Di's fair—and married !

In bliss we roved : I scorn'd the song
Which says that though young Love is strong,
The Fates are stronger :
Breezes then blew a boon to men,
Then buttercups were bright, and then
This grass was longer.

That day I saw, and much esteem'd
Di's ankles, which the clover seem'd
Inclined to smother :
It twitch'd, and soon untied (for fun)
The ribbon of her shoes, first one
And then the other.

I'm told that virgins augur some
Misfortune if their shoe-strings come
 To grief on Friday :
And so did Di, and then her pride
Decreed that shoe-strings so untied
 Are "so untidy !"

Of course I knelt, with fingers deft
I tied the right, and tied the left :
 Says Di, "The stubble
Is very stupid—as I live
I'm shock'd—I'm quite ashamed to give
 You so much trouble."

For answer I was fain to sink
To what we all would say and think
 Were Beauty present :
"Don't mention such a simple act,—
A trouble ? not the least. In fact,
 It's rather pleasant."

I trust that Love will never tease
Poor little Di, or prove that he's
 A graceless rover.
She's happy now as *Mrs. Smith*—
And less polite when walking with
 Her chosen lover !

Heigh-ho ! Although no moral clings
To Di's blue eyes, and sandal strings,
We've had our quarrels !—
I think that Smith is thought an ass,
I know that when they walk in grass
She wears *balmorals*.

1864.

JANET.

I SEE her portrait hanging there,
Her face, but only half as fair,
And while I scan it,
Old thoughts come back, by new thoughts met—
She smiles. I never can forget
The smile of Janet.

A matchless grace of head and hand,
Can art portray an air more grand ?
It cannot—can it ?
And then the brow, the lips, the eyes—
You look as if you could despise
Devotion, Janet !

I knew her as a child, and said
She ought to have inhabited
A brighter planet :
Some seem more meet for angel wings
Than Mother Nature's apron strings,—
And so did Janet.

She grew in beauty, and in pride,
Her waist was trim, and once I tried,
 In sport, to span it
At Church, with only this result,
They threaten'd with *quicunque vult*
 Both me and Janet.

Fairer she grew, till Love became
In me a very ardent flame,
 With Faith to fan it :
Alack, I play'd the fool, and she—
The fault of both lay much with me,
 But more with Janet.

For Janet chose a cruel part,—
How many win a tender heart,
 And then trepan it !
She left my bark to swim or sink,
Nor seem'd to care—and yet I think
 You liked me, Janet.

The old old tale ! you know the rest—
The heart that slumber'd in her breast
 Was hard as granite :
Who breaks a heart, and then omits
To gather up the broken bits,
 Is heartless, Janet !

I'm wiser now, for when I curse
My Fate, a voice cries, "Bad or worse,
 You must not ban it :
Take comfort, you are quits, for if
You mourn a love, stark dead and stiff,
 Why so does Janet."

IMPLORA PACE.

IS life at best a weary round
Of mingled joy and woe?
How soon my passing knell will sound!
Is Death a friend or foe?
My days are often sad, and vain
Is much that tempts me to remain—
And yet I'm loth to go.
O must I tread yon silent shore,
Go hence, and then be seen no more?

I love to think that those I loved
May gather round the bier
Of him who, if he erring proved,
Still held them more than dear.
My friends grow fewer day by day,
Yes, one by one they drop away,
And if I shed no tear,
Departed shades, while life endures,
This poor heart yearns for love—and yours.

When I am gone will any eye
Shed tears behind the hearse ?
Will any one survivor cry,
“ I could have spared a worse—
We never spoke ; we never met ;
I never heard his voice ; and yet
I loved him for his verse ?”
Such love would make the flowers wave
In gladness on their poet's grave.

A few, few years ! like one short week
Will pass, and leave behind
A stone moss-grown, that none will seek,
And none would care to find.
Then I shall sleep, and find release
In perfect rest—the perfect peace
For which my soul has pined ;—
And men will love, and weary men
Will sue for quiet slumber then.

SIR GYLES GYLES.

“Notissimum illud Phædri, Gallus quum tauro.”

UPPE, lazie loon ! 'tis mornynge prime,
The cockke of redde redde combe
This thrice hath crowed, 'tis past the time
To drive the olde bulle home.

Goe fling a rope about his hornnes,
And lead him safelie here :
Long since Sir Gyles, who slumber scornes,
Doth angle in the weir.

And knaves and wenches, less adoe,
Our Ladye is astir :
By *cockke and pie* she lutes it too
Behynde the silver fir.

His Spanish hat he bravelie weares,
With feathere droopynge wide,
In doublet fyne, Sir Valentyne
Is seated by her side.

Small care they share, that blissfulle pair ;
 She dons her kindest smyles ;
His songes invite and quite delighte
 The wyfe of good Sir Gyles.

But pert young pages point their thumbes,
 Her maids look slye, in shorte
All wondere how the old Knyghte comes
 To tarrie at his sporte.

There is a sudden stir at last ;
 Men run, and then, with dread,
They vowe Sir Gyles is dying fast !
 And then—Sir Gyles is dead !

The bulle hath caughte him near the thornes
 They call the *Parsonne's Plotte* ;
The bulle hath tost him on his hornnes,
 Before the brute is shotte.

Now Ladye Gyles is sorelie tryd,
 And sinks beneath the shockke :
She weeps from morn to eventyd,
 And on till crowe of cockke.

And tho' the sun returns, and though
 Another morninge smiles,
No cockke will crow, no bulle will low
 Agen for pore Sir Gyles.

And now the knyghte, as seemeth beste,
Is layd in hallowed mould ;
All in the mynstere crypt, where rest
His gallant sires and olde.

But first they take the olde bulle's hide
And crest, to form a shroud :
And when Sir Gyles is wrapp'd inside
His people wepe aloud.

Sir Valentyne doth well incline
To soothe my lady's woe ;
And soon she slepes, nor ever wepes,
An all the cockkes should crowe.

Ay, soone they are in wedlock tied,
Full soon ; and all, in fyne,
That spouse can say to chere his bride,
That sayth Sir Valentyne.

And gay agen are maids and men,
Nor knyghte nor ladye mournes,
Though Valentyne may trembel when
He sees a bulle with hornnes.

My wife and I once visited
The scene of all this woe,
Which fell out (so the curate said)
Four hundred years ago.

It needs no search to find a church
That all the land adorns,
We pass'd the weir, I thought with fear
About the *olde bulle's hornnes*.

No cock then crow'd, no bull there low'd,
But while we paced the aisles,
The curate told his tale, and show'd
A tablet to Sir Giles.

"'Twas raised by Lady Giles," he said,
And when I bent the knee I
Made out his name, and arms, and read,
HIC JACET SERVVS DEI.

Says I, "And so he sleeps below,
His wrongs all left behind him."
My wife cried "O!"—the clerk said, "No,
At least we could not find him.

"Last spring, repairing some defect,
We raised the carven stones,
Designing to again collect
And hide Sir Giles's bones.

“We dug adown, and up, and round,
For many weary morns,
Through all this ground ; but only found
An ancient pair of horns.”

MR. PLACID'S FLIRTATION.

"Jemima was cross, and I lost my umbrella
That day at the tomb of Cecilia Metella."

Letters from Rome.

MISS TRISTRAM'S *poulet* ended thus: "Nota bene,

We meet for croquet in the Aldobrandini."

Said my wife, "Then I'll drive, and you'll ride with
Selina"

(The fair spouse of Jones, of the Via Sistina).

We started: I'll own that my family deem

That I'm soft, but I'm not quite so soft as I seem;

As we cross'd the stones gently a nursemaid said

"La—

There goes Mrs. Jones with Miss Placid's papa!"

Our friends, one or two may be mention'd anon,

Had arranged *rendezvous* at the Gate of St. John:

That pass'd, off we spun over turf that's not green
there,

And soon were all met at the villa. You've been
there?

I will try and describe, or I won't, if you please,
The good cheer that was set for us under the trees :
You have read the *menu*, may you read it again ;
Champagne, perigord. galantine, and—champagne.

Suffice it to say I got seated between
Mrs. Jones and old Brown—to the latter's chagrin.
Poor Brown, who believes in himself—and, another
thing,
Whose talk is so bald, but whose cheeks are so—
t'other thing.

She sang, her sweet voice fill'd the gay garden alleys ;
I jested, but Brown would not smile at my sallies ;—
Selina remark'd that a swell met at Rome
Is not always a swell when you meet him at home.

The luncheon despatch'd, we adjourn'd to croquet,
A dainty, but difficult sport in its way.
Thus I counsel the sage, who to play at it stoops,—
Belabour thy neighbour, and spoon through thy hoops.

Then we stroll'd, and discourse found its kindest of
tones :

“ O how charming were solitude and—Mrs. Jones.”

“ Indeed, Mr. Placid, I dote on the sheeny
And shadowy paths of the Aldobrandini.”

A girl came with violet posies, and two
Gentle eyes, like her violets, laden with dew,
And a kind of an indolent, fine-lady air,—
As if she by accident found herself there.

I bought one. Selina was pleased to accept it ;
She gave me a rosebud to keep—and I've kept it.
Thus the moments flew by, and I think, in my heart,
When one vow'd one must go,—two were loth to
depart.

The twilight is near, we no longer can stay ;
The steeds are remounted, and wheels roll away.
The ladies *condemn* Mrs. Jones, as the phrase is,
But vie with each other in chanting my praises.

“ He has so much to say,” cries the fair Mrs. Legge ;
“ How amusing he was about missing the peg !”
“ What a beautiful smile !” says the plainest Miss
Gunn.

All echo, “ He's charming ! delightful ! What fun !”

This sounds rather nice, and it's perfectly clear it
Had sounded more nice had I happen'd to hear it ;
The men were less civil, and gave me a rub,
So I happen'd to hear when I went to the Club.

Says Brown, "I shall drop Mr. Placid's society ;"

(Brown is a prig of improper propriety ;)

"Hang him," said Smith (who from cant's not exempt),

"Why, he'll bring immorality into contempt."

Says I (to myself), when I found me alone,

"My dear wife has my heart, is it always her own?"

And further, says I (to myself), "I'll be shot

If I know if Selina adores me or not."

Says Jones, "I've just come from the *scavi*, at Veii,—

I've bought some remarkably fine scarabæi !"

TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS.

PAPA was deep in weekly bills,
Mamma was doing Fanny's frills,
Her gentle face full
Of woe ; said she, " I do declare
He can't go back in such a PAIR,
They're quite disgraceful ! "

" Confound it," quoth Papa—perhaps
The ban was deeper, but the lapse
Of time has drown'd it :
And yet what reason to suppose
He utter'd worse,—for goodness knows
He MEANT *Confound it !*

The butcher's book, that needful diary,
Had made my father's temper fiery,
And bubble over :
So quite in spite he flung it down,—
And spilt the ink, and spoilt his own
New table-cover

Of scarlet cloth ! Papa cried “ pish ! ”
(Which did not mean he did not wish
 He’d been more heedful) :
“ But luckily this cloth will dip,
And make a famous PAIR—get Snip
 To do the needful.”

’Twas thus that I went back to school
In garb no boy could ridicule,
 And soon becoming
A jolly child, I plunged in debt
For tarts, and promised fair to get
 The prize for summing.

But O ! my schoolmates soon began
Again to mock my outward man,
 And make me hate ’em !
Long sitting will broadcloth abrade,
The dye wore off, and so display’d
 A red substratum !

To both my parents then I flew—
Mamma shed tears, Papa cried “ Pooh,
 Come, stop this racket : ”
He’d still some cloth, so Snip was bid
To stitch me on two tails ; he did—
 And spoilt my jacket !

And then the boys, despite my wails,
Would slily come and lift my tails,
 And smack me soundly.
O weak Mamma ! O wrathful Dad !
Although your doings drove me mad,
 Ye loved me fondly.

Good friends, your Little Ones (who feel
These bitter woes, which only heal
 As wisdom mellows)
Need sympathy in deed and word ;
So never let them look absurd
 Beside their fellows.

My wife respects the THINGS I've doff'd,
And guards them carefully, and oft,
 She'll take and—air them !
The little Puss adores this PAIR,
And yet she doesn't seem to care
 That I should wear them.

BEGGARS.

I AM pacing Pall Mall in a rapt reverie,
I am thinking if Sophy is thinking of me,
When I'm roused by a ragged and shivering wretch,
Who appears to be well on his way to Jack Ketch.

He has got a bad face, and a shocking bad hat ;
A comb in his fist, and he sees I'm a flat,
For he says, " Buy a comb, it's a fine un to wear ;
Only try it, my Lord, through your whiskers and 'air."

He eyes my gold chain, as if anxious to crib it ;
He looks just as if he'd been blown from a gibbet.
I pause . . . and pass on, and beside the club fire
I settle that Sophy is all I desire.

As I walk from the club, and am deep in a strophè
That rolls upon all that's delicious in Sophy,
I'm humbly address'd by an " object " unnerving—
So tatter'd a dame must be " highly deserving."

She begs, and I'm touch'd, but I've much circumspection :

I stifle remorse with a soothing reflection—
That cases of vice are by no means a rarity—
The worst vice of all's indiscriminate charity.

Am I right? How I wish that our clerical guides
Would settle this question and others besides !
For always to harden one's fiddle-strings thus,
If wholesome for beggars, is hurtful for us.

A few minutes later (how pleasant for me !)
I'm seated by Sophy at five-o'clock tea :
Her table is loaded, for when a girl marries,
What bushels of rubbish they send her from *Barry's* !

“ There's a present for you, Sir ! ” Yes, thanks to her
thrift,
My pet has been able to buy me a gift :
And she slips in my hand, the delightfully sly thing !
A paper-weight form'd of a bronze lizard writhing.

“ What a charming *cadeau* ! and,” said I, “ so well
made,
But perhaps you don't know, you extravagant jade,
'That in casting this metal a live, harmless lizard
Was cruelly tortured in ghost and in gizzard ? ”

“ Pooh, pooh,” said my lady (I ought to defend her,
Her head may be giddy, her heart must be tender),
“ Hopgarten protests they’ve no feeling, and so
It was only their muscular movement, you know.”

Thinks I—when I’ve said *au revoir*, and depart
(A Comb in my pocket, a Weight at my heart),
And when wretched mendicants writhe, we’ve a notion
That begging is only a muscular motion.

LITTLE PITCHER.

(A BIRTHDAY ODE.)

THE Muse (for the muse is a Mentor of mine)
Observes that to-day Little Pitcher is nine !
'Tis her *fête* !—so, although retrospection is pleasant,
We'll muse on her past, but we'll think of her Present.

A Gift !—In their praise though we've raved, sung, and
written,

I don't care to give her a puppy or kitten ;
Though their virtues I've heard Little Pitcher extol :
She's old for a watch, and she's young for a doll !

Of a worthless old Block she's the dearest of Chips,
For what nonsense she talks when she opens her lips.
Then her mouth when she's laughing, indeed it
appears

To exult at the tips of her comical EARS.

Her Ears! ah, her Ears! I remember the squalling
With which mine were greeted, when Rambert and
Lawling
Were boring (as I do) her Organs of Hearing—
Come! I'll give her for each of those Organs an
Earring!

Here goes! They are form'd of the two scarabæi
I bought of the old *contadino* at Veii.
They cost a few *pauls*, but, as history shows,
For what runs through the Ears, we must pay through
the Nose.

And now, Little Pitcher, give ear to my rede,
And guard your two gems with a scrupulous heed,
For think of the woeful mishap that befell
The damsel who dropp'd such a pair in the well.

That poor Little Pitcher would gladly have flown
And have given her Ears to have let well alone;
For when she got home her Instructress austere
Dismiss'd her to bed with a Flea in her Ear.

What! Tell you that tale? Come, a tale with a sting
Would be rather too much of an excellent thing!
I can't point a moral, or sing you the song—
My Years are too short—and your Ears are too long.

ADVICE TO A POET.

DEAR Poet, never rhyme at all !
But if you must, don't tell your neighbours,
Or five in six, who cannot scrawl,
Will dub you donkey for your labours.
This epithet may seem unjust
To you, or any verse-begetter :
O must we own—I fear we must !—
That nine in ten deserve no better.

Then let them bray with leathern lungs,
And match you with the beast that grazes ;
Or wag their heads, and hold their tongues,
Or damn you with the faintest praises.
Be patient, you will get your due
Of honours—or humiliations :
So look for sympathy, but do
Not look to find it from relations.

When strangers first approved my books
My kindred marvell'd what the praise meant ;
They now wear more respectful looks,
But can't get over their amazement.

Indeed, they've power to wound, beyond
That wielded by the fiercest hater,
For all the time they are so fond—
Which makes the aggravation greater.

Most warblers now but half express
The threadbare thoughts they feebly utter :
If they attempted nought—or less !—
They would not sink, and gasp, and flutter.
Fly low at first, then mount, and win
The niche for which the town's contesting ;
And never mind your kith and kin—
But never give them cause for jesting.

Hold Pegasus in hand—control
A vein for ornament ensnaring ;
Simplicity is yet the soul
Of all that Time deems worth the sparing.
Long lays are not a lively sport,
Reduce your own to half a quarter ;
Unless your Public thinks them short,
Posterity will cut them shorter.

I look on bards who whine for praise
With feelings of profoundest pity :
They hunger for the Poet's bays,
And swear one's waspish when one's witty.

The critic's lot is passing hard—

Between ourselves, I think reviewers,
When call'd to truss a crowing bard,
Should not be sparing of the skewers.

We all, the foolish and the wise,

Regard our verse with fascination,
Through asinine paternal eyes,
And hues of Fancy's own creation ;
Then pray, Sir, pray excuse a queer
And sadly self-deluded rhymers,
Who thinks his beer (the smallest beer !)
Has all the gust of *alt hochheimer*.

Dear Bard, the Muse is such a minx—

So tricky, it were wrong to let her
Rest satisfied with what she thinks
Is perfect : try and teach her better.
And if you'll only use perchance
But half the pains to learn that we, Sir,
Have used to hide our ignorance—
How very clever you will be, Sir !



NOW FIRST COLLECTED AND
PUBLISHED



AN ASPIRATION.

Written for two Woodcuts in "A Round of Days."
(Christmas, 1865.)

I ASK'D Miss Di, who loves her sheep,
To look at this delightful peep
Of April leafage, pure and beamy :
A pair of girls in hoops and nets
Caress a pair of woolly pets,
And all is young, and nice, and dreamy.

Miss Di has kindly eyes for all
That's pretty, quaint, and pastoral :
Said she, "These ladies sentimental
Are lucky, in a world of shams,
To find a pair of luckless lambs
So white, and so extremely gentle."

I heard her with surprise and doubt,
For though I don't much care about
The World she spoke with such disdain of,
And though the lamb I mostly see
Is overdone, it seem'd to me
That these had little to complain of.

When beings of the fairer sex
Arrange their white arms round our necks,
 We are, and ought to be enraptured—
I would I were your lamb, Miss Di,
Or even that poor butterfly,
 With some small hope of being captured.

GERALDINE AND I.

“Di te, Damasippe, deæque
Verum ob consilium donent tonsore.”

I HAVE talk'd with her often in noonday heat,
We have walk'd under wintry skies,
Her voice is the dearest voice, and sweet
Is the light in her gentle eyes ;
It is bliss in the silent woods, among
Gay crowds, or in any place,
To mould her mind, to gaze in her young
Confiding face.

For ever may roses divinely blow,
And wine-dark pansies charm
By the prim box path where I felt the glow
Of her dimpled, trusting arm,
And the sweep of her silk as she turn'd and smiled
A smile of coral and pearls ;
The breeze was in love with the darling child,
And coax'd her curls.

She show'd me her ferns and woodbine sprays,
Foxglove and jasmine stars,
A mist of blue in the beds, a blaze
Of red in the celadon jars :

And velvety bees in convolvulus bells,
And roses of bountiful Spring.
But I said—"Though roses and bees have spells,
They have thorn and sting."

She show'd me ripe peaches behind a net
As fine as her veil, and fat
Gold fish agape, who lazily met
For her crumb—I grudged them that !
A squirrel, some rabbits with long lop ears,
And guinea-pigs, tortoiseshell—wee ;
And I told her that eloquent truth inheres
In all we see.

I lifted her doe by its lops; said I,
"Even here deep meaning lies,—
Why have squirrels these ample tails, and why
Have rabbits these prominent eyes?"
She smiled and said, as she twirl'd her veil,
"For some nice little cause, no doubt—
If you lift a guinea-pig up by the tail
His eyes drop out!"

HER LETTERS.

Written for a Woodcut in "Pictures of Society."
(Christmas, 1865.)

MY lady fair, my lady fair,—
I'm very much perplex'd concerning
Your modish dress, your pensive air,
And all those letters you are burning.

Have sorrows come? Has pleasure sped?
Is earthly bliss an empty bubble?
Is some one dull, or something dead?
O may I, mayn't I share your trouble?

The letter dropping from that hand,—
The hand on which that cheek is leaning,—
The papers torn,—the glowing brand,—
All, all are eloquent with meaning.

Perhaps the rain has dash'd your day,
Has *Bulley* breathed his last fond twitter?
Or has the Loved One gone away,
And was he—O too sad to quit her?

She reads her letter all alone !

Ah, no—he never meant to slight her ;
She's very sad for him. I own
I'm half prepared to hate that writer !

Sweet lady, so unkindly starr'd,
Forgive my frank and friendly ardour,
But if your fate is very hard,
O think that mine is even harder !

Ay, so it is, and is it fair ?
Poor men (your elders and your betters !)
Who can't look pretty in despair,
Feel quite as sad about their Letters.

THE OLD SHEPHERD.

Written for Two Woodcuts in "A Round of Days."
(Christmas, 1865.)

I. ON THE HILLS.

THE vapours glitter on the hill,
The morning airs are soft,
There's music in the merry rill,
And music in the croft.
But turn from what is gay and green
To gaze on this pathetic scene.

The silent tarn is frozen dry,
The hills return no sound,
There's winter in the dappled sky,
And winter on the ground.
The shepherd knows the scene austere,
And when the wind is temper'd here.

AT HOME.

I grudge that lonely man his crook ;
It seems no idle whim,
That if he reads in Nature's book,
Her voice has been to him
A spiritual life, to sway
And cheer him on his endless way.

O fair are these sequester'd lives,
Their labours never soil,
Thrice blest is he who thus derives
A dignity from toil ;
And He who loves us all will keep
The shepherd who so loves his sheep.

ST. JAMES'S STREET.

(A GRUMBLE.)

ST. James's Street, of classic fame !
The finest people throng it !
St. James's Street ? I know the name,
I think I've pass'd along it.
Why, that's where Sacharissa sigh'd
When Waller read his ditty ;
Where Byron lived, and Gibbon died,
And Albanley was witty.

A noted street. It skirts the Park
Where Pepys once took his pastime ;
Come, gaze on fifty men of mark,
And then recall the fast time !
The *plats* at White's, the play at Crock's,
The bumpers to Miss Gunning ;
The *bonhomie* of Charlie Fox,
And Selwyn's ghastly funning.

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,
As north and south it stretches,
Still seems to smack of Rolliad squibs,
And Gillray's fiercer sketches ;

The quaint old dress, the grand old style,
The *mots*, the racy stories ;
The wine, the dice, the wit, the bile,
The hate of Whigs and Tories.

At dusk, when I am strolling there,
Dim forms will rise around me ;
Lepel flits past me in her chair,
And Congreve's airs astound me !
And once Nell Gwynne, a frail young sprite,
Look'd kindly when I met her ;
I shook my head, perhaps,—but quite
Forgot to quite forget her.

The street is still a lively tomb
For rich, and gay, and clever ;
The crops of dandies bud, and bloom,
And die as fast as ever.
Now gilded youth loves cutty pipes,
And slang the worse for wearing :
It can't approach its prototypes
In taste, or tone, or bearing.

In Brummell's day of buckle shoes,
Starch cravats, and roll collars,
They'd fight, and woo, and bet—and lose
Like gentlemen and scholars :

I like young men to go the pace,
I half forgive old Rapid ;—
These louts disgrace their name and race—
So vicious and so vapid !

Worse times may come. *Bon ton*, indeed,
Will then be quite forgotten,
And all we much revere will speed
From ripe to worse than rotten ;
Then grass will sprout between yon stones,
And owls will roost at Boodle's,
And Echo will hurl back the tones
Of screaming Yankee Doodles.

I like the haunts of old Cockaigne,
Where wit and wealth were squander'd,
The halls that tell of hoop and train,
Where grace and rank have wander'd,
The halls where ladies fair and leal
First ventured to adore me !—
And something of the like I feel
For this old street before me.

ROTTEN ROW.

I HOPE I'm fond of much that's good,
As well as much that's gay ;
I'd like the country if I could,
I like the park in May :
And when I ride in Rotten Row,
I wonder why they call'd it so.

A lively scene on turf and road,
The crowd is bravely drest :
The Ladies' Mile has overflow'd,
The seats are in request :
The nimble air, so warm and clear,
Can hardly stir a ringlet here.

I'll halt beneath the pleasant trees,
And drop my bridle-rein,
And, quite alone, indulge at ease
The philosophic vein :
I'll moralise on all I see—
I think it all was made for me !

Forsooth, and on a nicer spot
 The sunbeam never shines ;
 Young ladies here can talk and trot
 With statesmen and divines :
 Could I have chosen, I'd have been
 A Duke, a Beauty, or a Dean !

What grooms ! what gallant gentlemen !
 What well-appointed hacks !
 What glory in their pace—and then
 What Beauty on their backs !
 My Pegasus would never flag
 If weighted as my lady's nag.

But where is now the courtly troop
 That once rode laughing by ?
 I miss the curls of Cantilupe,
 The smile of Lady Di :
 They all could laugh from night to morn,
 And Time has laugh'd them all to scorn.

I then could frolic in the van
 With dukes and dandy earls ;
 I then was thought a nice young man
 By rather nice young girls :
 I've half a mind to join Miss Browne,
 And try one canter up and down.

Ah, no ! I'll linger here awhile,
And dream of days of yore ;
For me bright eyes have lost the smile,
The sunny smile they wore :—
Perhaps they say, what I'll allow,
That I'm not quite so handsome now.

1867.

A NICE CORRESPONDENT !

THE glow and the glory are plighted
To darkness, for evening is come ;
The lamp in Glebe Cottage is lighted,
The birds and the sheep-bells are dumb.
I'm alone at my casement, for *Pappy*
Is summon'd to dinner to Kew :
I'm alone, my dear Fred, but I'm happy—
I'm thinking of you.

I wish you were here. Were I duller
Than dull, you'd be dearer than dear ;
I am drest in your favourite colour—
Dear Fred, how I wish you were here !
I am wearing my lazuli necklace,
The necklace you fasten'd askew !
Was there ever so rude or so reckless
A darling as you ?

I want you to come and pass sentence
On two or three books with a plot ;
Of course you know “ Janet's Repentance ? ”
I'm reading Sir Waverley Scott,

The story of Edgar and Lucy,
How thrilling, romantic, and true ;
The Master (his bride was a goosey !)
Reminds me of you.

To-day, in my ride, I've been crowning
The beacon ; its magic still lures,
For up there you discoursed about Browning,
That stupid old Browning of yours.
His vogue and his verve are alarming,
I'm anxious to give him his due ;
But, Fred, he's not nearly so charming
A poet as you.

I heard how you shot at The Beeches,
I saw how you rode Chanticleer,
I have read the report of your speeches,
And echo'd the echoing cheer.
There's a whisper of hearts you are breaking,
I envy their owners, I do !
Small marvel that Fortune is making
Her idol of you.

Alas for the world, and its dearly
Bought triumph, and fugitive bliss !
Sometimes I half wish I were merely
A plain or a penniless miss ;

But, perhaps, one is best with a measure
Of pelf, and I'm not sorry, too,
That I'm pretty, because it's a pleasure,
My dearest, to you.

Your whim is for frolic and fashion,
Your taste is for letters and art,
This rhyme is the commonplace passion
That glows in a fond woman's heart.
Lay it by in a dainty deposit
For relics, we all have a few !
Love, some day they'll print it, because it
Was written to you.

1868.

THE SILENT POOL.

Written for Two Woodcuts in "A Round of Days."
(Christmas, 1865.)

A WINTERY sky at eventide,
And doleful woods. My faith, yon lassie
Was rash to wait alone beside
The silent pool,—so still and glassy.

It looks far deeper than the sea,
More ghostly than the lake of Charon ;
The sudden bank appears to me
A fearsome spot to nurse despair on.

She watch'd and wept. To meet him here
She climb'd the stile, and cross'd the stubble ;
He's come at last to dry her tear,
And ease her of her tender trouble.

They've met. Their greeting is, indeed,
The fondest of young Love's embraces ;
The blessed moments lightly speed,
Love—only Love, can see their faces.

O happy love, without alloy—
O happy youth, that never closes—
O happy eyes, that veil their joy—
And O, sweet lips, more sweet than roses !

Most people like to bill and coo,
And some have done it for the last time,
So, blissful pair, we envy you
Your pleasant and improving pastime.

For life is toil, and age is bane
When all we love is dead or missing;
But if we see this Pool again,
You'll still be here, and still be kissing.

MISGIVINGS.

Written for a Woodcut in "Pictures of Society."
(Christmas, 1865.)

THE lambs begin their wonted game
When skies are fair and fields are vernal ;
And then young girls would do the same,
And laugh at lambs with tie maternal.

Away they run by pool and glade,
The air is glad with breezy laughter ;
Their anxious mothers look dismay'd,
And do their best to follow after.

Poor Lady, you are sad indeed !
Your tender mother's heart is bleeding ;
Your lamb is off to paths that lead—
You know not where those paths are leading !

Your lambkin pined for stronger food
Than homely care, and home caressing ;
She's gone ! You gave her all you could—
A bright blue ribbon, and your blessing.

Then let her sport where roses blow,
And laugh away her sunny hours ;
And if she pluck some weeds, we know
They fade, ay, faster than her flowers.

She does not need the shepherd's crook ;
Her griefs are only passing shadow ;
She'll bask beside the purest brook,
And nibble in the greenest meadow.

She'll tarry but a little while,
I see her now returning hither
With wreathèd brow and rosy smile—
Perhaps she brings a lambkin with her !

AN OLD BUFFER.

BUFFER.—A cushion or apparatus, with strong springs, to deaden the buff or concussion between a moving body and one on which it strikes.—*Webster's English Dictionary.*

“A KNOCK-ME-DOWN sermon, and worthy of
Birch,”

Say I to my wife, as we toddle from church ;

“Convincing indeed” is the lady’s remark ;

“How logical, too, on the size of the Ark !”

Then Blossom cut in, without begging our pardons,

“Pa, was it as big as the ‘Logical Gardens ?”

“Miss Blossom,” said I, to my dearest of dearies,

“Papa disapproves of nonsensical queries ;

The Ark was an Ark, and had people to build it,

Enough that we read Noah built it and fill’d it :

Mamma does not ask how he caught his opossums”

—Said she, “That remark is as foolish as Blossom’s.”

Thus talking and walking the time is beguiled

By my orthodox wife and my sceptical child ;

I act as their *buffer* whenever I can,

And you see I’m of use as a family-man.

I parry their blows, and I've plenty to do—
I think that the child's are the worst of the two !

My wife has a healthy aversion for sceptics,
She vows that they're bad when they're only dyspeptics ;
May Blossom prove neither the one nor the other,
But do what she's bid by her excellent mother.—
She thinks I'm a Solon, perhaps, if I huff her,
She'll think I'm a — something that's denser and
tougher !

MAMMA, *loquitur*.

“ If Blossom's a sceptic, or saucy, I'll search,
And I'll find her a wholesome corrective in Birch.”

TO LINA OSWALD.

(AGED FIVE YEARS.)

I TUMBLE out of bed betimes
To write my love these little rhymes ;
And meet the hour, and meet the place
To bless her happy morning face.
I send her all my heart can store ;
I seem to see her as before.

Again she stands beneath the boughs,
Reproves the pup, and feeds the cows ;
Unvex'd by rule, unscared by ill,
She wanders at her " own sweet will ;"
For what grave fiat could confine
My little charter'd libertine,
Yet free from feeling or from seeing
The burthen of her moral being?

But change must come, and forms and dyes
Will change before her changing eyes ;
She'll learn to blush, and hope, and fear—
And where shall I be then, my dear?

Little gossip, set apart
But one small corner of your heart ;
There still is one not quite employ'd,
So let me find and fill that void ;
Then run and jump, and laugh and play,
But love me though I'm far away.

The world would lose its finest joys
Without its little girls and boys ;
Their careless glee, and simple ruth,
And trust, and innocence, and truth,
—Ah, what would your poor poet do
Without such little folk as you ?

BROOMHALL, *September*, 1868.

ON "A PORTRAIT OF A LADY."

Vide Royal Academy Catalogue.

BY THE PAINTER.

SHE is good, for she must have a guileless mind
With that noble, trusting air ;
A rose with a passionate heart is twined
In her crown of golden hair.
Some envy the cross that caressingly dips
In her bosom, and some had died
For the promise of bliss on her ripe red lips,
And her thousand charms beside.

She is lovely and good ; she has peerless eyes,
A haunting shape. She stands
In a blossoming croft, under kindling skies,
The weirdest of faery lands :
There are sapphire hills by the far-off seas,
Grave laurels, and tender limes ;
They tremble and glow in the morning breeze,
—My Beauty is up betimes !

A bevy of idlers press around,
To wonder, and wish, and loll ;
" Now who is the painter, and where has he found
A woman we all extol,
With her rosebud mouth, and her candid brow,
And the bloom of bygone days ?"
How natural sounds their worship, how
Impertinent seems their praise !

I stand aloof ; I can well afford
To pardon the babble and crush
As they praise a work (do I need reward ?)
That has grown beneath my brush.
My thoughts are away to that happy day,
A few short weeks ago,
When we left the games, and the dance, to stray
Through the dewy flowers, alone.

My feet are again among flowers divine,
Away from the noise and glare,
When I kiss'd her mouth, and her lips press'd mine,
And I fasten'd that rose in her hair.
I gather'd it wet for my own sweet pet
As we whisper'd and walk'd apart ;
She gave me that rose, it is fragrant yet,
And its home is near my heart.

THE JESTER'S MORAL.

“ I wish that I could run away
From House, and Court, and Levee :
Where bearded men appear to-day,
Just Eton boys grown heavy.”

W. M. PRAED.

IS human life a pleasant game
That gives the palm to all?
A fight for fortune, or for fame,
A struggle, and a fall?
Who views the Past, and all he prized,
With tranquil exultation?
And who can say, I've realised
My fondest aspiration?

Alas, not one ! No, rest assured
That all are prone to quarrel
With Fate, when worms destroy their gourd,
Or mildew spoils their laurel :
The prize may come to cheer our lot,
But all too late ; and granted
'Tis even better, still 'tis not
Exactly what we wanted.

My schoolboy time ! I wish to praise
That bud of brief existence,
The vision of my younger days
Now trembles in the distance.
An envious vapour lingers here,
And there I find a chasm ;
But much remains, distinct and clear,
To sink enthusiasm.

Such thoughts just now disturb my soul
With reason good, for lately
I took the train to Marley-knoll,
And cross'd the fields to Mately.
I found old Wheeler at his gate,
Who used rare sport to show me :
My Mentor once on springe and bait—
But Wheeler did not know me.

“ Goodlord ! ” at last exclaim'd the churl,
“ Are you the little chap, sir,
What used to train his hair in curl,
And wore a scarlet cap, sir ? ”
And then he took to fill in blanks,
And conjure up old faces ;
And talk of well-remember'd pranks
In half-forgotten places.

It pleased the man to tell his brief
And rather mournful story,
Old Bliss's school had come to grief,
And Bliss had "gone to glory."
His trees were fell'd, his house was razed,
And what less keenly pain'd me,
A venerable donkey grazed
Exactly where he caned me.

And where have all my playmates sped,
Whose ranks were once so serried?
Why some are wed, and some are dead,
And some are only buried;
Frank Petre, erst so full of fun,
Is now St. Blaise's prior,
And Travers, the attorney's son,
Is member for the shire.

Dull maskers we! Life's festival
Enchants the blithe new-comer;
But seasons change, then where are all
The friendships of our summer?
Wan pilgrims flit athwart our track,
Cold looks attend the meeting,
We only greet them, glancing back,
Or pass without a greeting!

I owe old Bliss some rubs, but pride
Constrains me to postpone 'em,—
He taught me something, ere he died,
About *nil nisi bonum*.

I've met with wiser, better men,
But I forgive him wholly ;
Perhaps his jokes were sad, but then
He used to storm so drolly.

I still can laugh, is still my boast,
But mirth has sounded gayer ;
And which provokes my laughter most,
The preacher, or the player ?
Alack, I cannot laugh at what
Once made us laugh so freely,
For Nestroy and Grassot are not—
And where is Mr. Keeley ?

O shall I run away from hence,
And dress and shave like Crusoe ?
Or join St. Blaise ? No, Common Sense
Forbid that I should do so.
I'd sooner dress your Little Miss
As Paulet shaves his poodles !
As soon propose for Betsy Bliss,
Or get proposed for Boodle's.

We prate of Life's illusive dyes,
And yet fond hope misleads us ;
We all believe we near the prize,
Till some fresh dupe succeeds us !
A bright reward, forsooth ! And though
No mortal has attain'd it,
I still hope on, for well I know
That Love has thus ordain'd it.

PARIS, *November*, 1864.

(*Published in* 1865.)

NOTES.

NOTE TO "A HUMAN SKULL."

"In our last month's Magazine you may remember there were some verses about a portion of a skeleton. Did you remark how the poet and present proprietor of the human skull at once settled the sex of it, and determined off-hand that it must have belonged to a woman? Such skulls are locked up in many gentlemen's hearts and memories. Bluebeard, you know, had a whole museum of them—as that imprudent little last wife of his found out to her cost. And, on the other hand, a lady, we suppose, would select hers of the sort which had carried beards when in the flesh."—*The Adventures of Philip on his Way through the World. Cornhill Magazine, January, 1861.*

NOTE TO "TO MY OLD FRIEND POSTUMUS."

The Well-beloved!—B. L. died 26th July, 1853.

NOTE TO "GLYCERE."

Un Vieillard. Jeune fille au riant visage,
Que cherches-tu sous cet ombrage ?
La Jeune Fille. Des fleurs pour orner mes cheveux.
Je me rends au prochain village.
Avec le printemps et ses feux,
Bergères, bergers amoureux
Vont danser sur l'herbe nouvelle.
Déjà le sistre les appelle :
Glycère est sans doute avec eux.
De ces hameaux c'est la plus belle ;
Je veux l'effacer à leurs yeux :
Voyez ces fleurs, c'est un présage.

Le Vieillard. Sais-tu quel est ce lieu sauvage ?
La Jeune Fille. Non, et tout m'y semble nouveau.
Le Vieillard. Là repose, jeune étrangère,
 La plus belle de ce hameau.
 Ces fleurs pour effacer Glycère
 Tu les cueilles sur son tombeau !

BÉRANGER.

NOTE TO "TO MY MISTRESS."

"M. Deschanel quotes the following charming little poem by Corneille, addressed to a young lady who had not been quite civil to him. He says with truth—'Le sujet est léger, le rythme court, mais on y retrouve la fierté de l'homme, et aussi l'ampleur du tragique.'

- ' Marquise, si mon visage
 A quelques traits un peu vieux,
 Souvenez-vous, qu'à mon âge
 Vous ne vaudrez guère mieux.
- ' Le temps aux plus belles choses
 Se plaît à faire un affront,
 Et saura faner vos roses
 Comme il a ridé mon front.
- ' Le même cours des planètes
 Règle nos jours et nos nuits ;
 On m'a vu ce que vous êtes,
 Vous serez ce que je suis.
- ' Cependant j'ai quelques charmes
 Qui sont assez éclatants
 Pour n'avoir pas trop d'alarmes
 De ces ravages du temps.
- ' Vous en avez qu'on adore,
 Mais ceux que vous méprisez
 Pourraient bien durer encore
 Quand ceux-là seront usés.

‘ Ils pourront sauver la gloire
Des yeux qui me semblent doux, ‘
Et dans mille ans faire croire
Ce qu’il me plaira de vous.

‘ Chez cette race nouvelle
Où j’aurai quelque crédit,
Vous ne passerez pour belle
Qu’autant que je l’aurai dit.

‘ Pensez-y, belle Marquise,
Quoiqu’un grison fasse effroi,
Il vaut qu’on le courtise
Quand il est fait comme moi.’

The last four stanzas in particular are brimful of spirit, and the mixture of pride and vanity which they display is remarkable.”
—*Saturday Review*, July 23rd, 1864.

NOTE TO “THE ROSE AND THE RING.”

Mr. Thackeray spent a portion of the winter of 1854 in Rome, and while there he wrote his little Christmas story called “The Rose and the Ring.” He was a great friend of the distinguished American sculptor, Mr. Story, and was a frequent visitor at his house. I have heard Mr. Story speak with emotion of the kindness of Mr. Thackeray to his little daughter, then recovering from a severe illness, and he told me that Mr. Thackeray used to come nearly every day to read to Miss Story, often bringing portions of his manuscript with him.

Five or six years afterwards Miss Story showed me a very pretty copy of “The Rose and the Ring,” which Mr. Thackeray had sent her, with a facetious sketch of himself in the act of presenting her with the work.

NOTE TO “SIR GYLES GYLES.”

I have reprinted these burlesque lines, and some others of the same character, although I confess they are now eclipsed by the excellent verses of Mr. Henry Leigh and Mr. W. S. Gilbert, whose best poems are, in their way, as good as the “Rejected Addresses,” and will survive many works of far greater pretension.

NOTE.

The kind of verse which I have attempted in some of the pieces in this volume was in repute during the era of Swift and Prior, and again during the earlier years of this century. Afterwards it fell into comparative neglect, but has now regained some of its old popularity.

Suckling, Swift, Prior, Cowper, Landor, Thomas Moore, Praed, and Thackeray may be considered its representative men, and each has his peculiar merit. We admire Suckling for his gusto, and careless, natural grace, Swift for his mordant humour, and Prior for his sprightly wit. Cowper was a master of tender and playful irony; Moore, as a satirist, was a very expert swordsman, and, although possessing little real sentiment, he had wit and sparkling fancy in abundance. Praed possessed a fancy less wild than Moore, while his sympathies were narrower than Thackeray's, and his pathos and humour were inferior. He had plenty of wit, however, and a highly idiomatic, most finished style, an exquisite turn of expression, and, in his own vein, has never been, and it may be safely affirmed, never can be excelled. Nevertheless, the same objection may be made against the poetry of Praed which might be brought against the poetry of Pope, namely, that there is little relief to his picture, because all is so sharply cut, and so distinct. There are no peeps of tender blue sky or half-defined distances in his landscape.

Landor was rather wanting in humour and variety, but he atoned for it by his pathos, and his pellucid and classical style. The best of his little poems are as clearly cut as antique gems, and appear to me to be almost the perfection of poetic expression.

It is with diffidence that I again offer my own trifling volume to the public. No one is so painfully aware as myself of its many shortcomings, of its extreme insignificance, and of its great incompleteness. If I have included pieces which ought to have been consigned to the dust-bin of immediate oblivion, I hope for forgiveness.

THE END.

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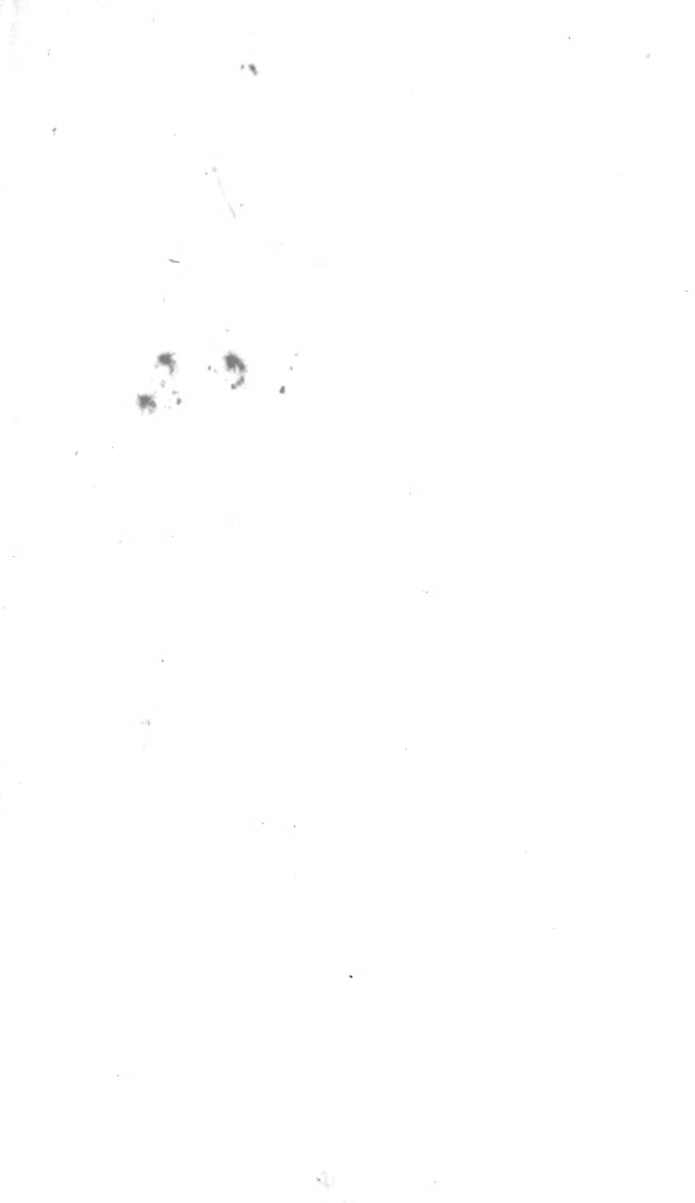
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